

MR. RAYBURN.

BY PRESLEY W. MORRIS.

I REMEMBER the man well. I have good reason never to forget him. That first day upon which I beheld him I was in the office of the only hotel that my native town, a village situated upon the bank of the Ohio River, boasted. I was then a slender boy of eighteen. It was quite a cool day in early fall, and I was standing by the stove warming myself when he entered. The stage had arrived, and the only passenger for our place had got out. He stopped a moment by the fire, and then went to the register and wrote his name.

"Can you show me to a room immediately?" he said to the landlord. "I expect to remain here for some time."

When he had left the office, boyish curiosity prompted me to examine the hotel register. The last name written there was Mr. Rayburn. When the landlord returned he looked at the name also.

"Fine-looking man," he said to me. "Shouldn't wonder if he were a member of Congress, or something of that kind."

"Yes," said I, somewhat ambiguously. I meant that the stranger was a fine-looking man. In truth he was, as I had noticed when he entered. His figure was tall and commanding; his head large and well set

on his shoulders; his face a handsome one, with keen bright eyes. He was well-dressed, and seemed to be about forty years of age.

I left the hotel and went home. During the next week I did not see Mr. Rayburn again, as it chanced. Still, I did not forget him, and I knew he had not taken his departure, for I inquired of the landlord of the hotel. But at the end of a week my opportunities for beholding him were very much increased.

"Mary," said my father to my mother, "could we accommodate a boarder, temporarily?"

My mother signified that we could, if the boarder would be pleasant and agreeable, provided my father desired that we should.

"Who desires to be accommodated?" she asked.

"A gentleman at the Gibson House," my father answered. "I have made his acquaintance and he is one of the most agreeable men I ever met. He states that he has come here, as a quiet place, for his health. He prefers to board at a private house."

"What is his name?" asked my mother. "Rayburn."

And it was decided that Mr. Rayburn should become our boarder.

He came. The impression that he made was favorable. By the time a week had passed he seemed like a member of our family. He was a perfect gentleman in manners. His store of knowledge was wonderful, and it delighted me to hear him and my father talk.

I soon noticed one thing, Mr. Rayburn never smiled. He did not appear to be unhappy, but still that fact remained.

About this time the teacher of our village school resigned his position. The duty of employing another became incumbent upon my father.

"I am going to offer Mr. Rayburn the school," he informed mother, one evening, in my presence.

"Mr. Rayburn!" she exclaimed. "Why, it is not likely he will take it. I have been taking it for granted that he is a gentleman of leisure with an abundance of means."

"Perhaps so, and perhaps not," answered father; "at any rate I do not think he will resent the offer."

He did not resent it. Instead, he accepted the position. He began his duties immediately. Never was a school conducted more to the satisfaction of the people of our town. Mr. Rayburn, gentleman and scholar, pleased everybody. His kindness and gentleness won the hearts of all his pupils, and I was one of his favorites.

Several weeks glided by. One night I retired to rest early, not feeling very well. For some time I tossed restlessly, but finally I fell asleep. I know not how long I had slept, when I was awakened by a voice. Mr. Rayburn's room adjoined mine and the voice was in his room. I listened intently. The voice was the voice of Mr. Rayburn himself.

"It is a lie!" he cried. "I never killed Frank Ogden. False accusers, demons, fiends, away, and torment me not."

And that was all I heard then. But a few nights afterwards I heard him crying out nearly the same words. Of the first time I had not yet spoken to any one. Now, however, I went to my father, and told him all.

"Pooh! pooh!" he said, "Mr. Rayburn is just talking in his sleep. Probably it is part of some old play, merely, that he is repeating. Don't be frightened at such a trivial matter, my lad."

I accepted my father's view of the matter and felt much relieved.

But the end, sudden, tragic, terrible, came.

In school one day, I was at the blackboard explaining a problem to Mr. Rayburn. I had just concluded, when he sprang to his feet and stretching out his arm pointed his finger straight at me.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed.

"Why, Mr. Rayburn," I cried in astonishment, "you certainly know me."

"Yes, I know you," he shouted in a loud tone, "I know you! I have reason to know you. You are the chief of my accusers. Perjured villain, had it not been for you, I had never occupied the cell of a felon. Ha! ha! Richard Ogden, the day of retribution is at hand, and you shall die."

I understood at last. The man was mad. He sprang toward me, and I turned and fled. I ran down the aisle of the schoolroom, and leaped out of the door. He followed me, and I sped away at the top of my speed. The schoolhouse was situated outside the limits of the town, and near the river.

Terror lent wings to my speed, and on, on we sped. But in my dismay I took the course away from the village instead of toward it.

It was an unequal race. Soon I heard the panting breath of my pursuer close behind me. He came closer. He laid a fierce grasp upon me. He was a powerful man and mad, so I was as an infant in his clutches.

I have said that the schoolhouse was near the river. We came now close by the stream, at a place where the bank was high and steep. Within a few days heavy rains had fallen, and the river was greatly swollen.

Mr. Rayburn dragged me to the edge of the bank. He lifted me in his arms.

"Now, prince of perjured scoundrels," he cried, "behold your doom!"

Below me the stream rushed like a torrent, huge piles of drift and great cakes of ice grinding against each other with terrific force. Looking death in the face I suddenly became calm.

"Friend Rayburn," I said, "bethink yourself. I acknowledge that you are innocent. If you destroy me, you destroy the one who holds the secret of your innocence. Slay me not and I will proclaim your innocence to all the world."

My object was to gain time. I knew that in a little while aid would arrive. My words had the desired effect. Rayburn stepped back from the fearful brink and placed me upon the earth.

"True!" he muttered, "very true!"

And for a minute he sat muttering those words, "true, very true." Then he cried: "Swear that you will proclaim my innocence."

The sky waved before my eyes. How could I swear to proclaim that of which I knew nothing? Yet no aid was at hand, and I must do that or die. What a fearful alternative!

But once more reason flew to my aid. "You have no Bible," I said; "you should have me swear upon a Bible."

"Yes," he returned. "I must find one."

He lifted me in his arms and started away from the river. Would I be saved?

"But wait," cried Rayburn. "Let me think. He who swears falsely once will do so again. No, you shall not escape me." Again he turned toward the river. An instant later a wild shout arose behind him. Help was at hand at last. Even then I could scarcely have escaped, but Rayburn's foot caught in some obstruction, and he stumbled and fell. I was released from his

grasp. Taking advantage of this fact I sprang away from him toward my friends. Rayburn leaped to his feet instantly, but I was safe beyond his reach.

"Ha, fiends! you are after me once more," he shrieked. "Avant, demons; and be the blood of my body and my soul upon your hands. Ye are all perjured, and have come to drag me back to a felon's cell. Ha! ha! I prefer the vaults of hell to the mercy that you will show me."

And with a great bound, Rayburn sprang over the bank into the rushing, whirling waters below, giving forth a cry that was terrible in its fear and agony.

And that was the last. He was never heard of afterwards; and naught more was ever known of him than what I have narrated. What position he had occupied in life, whether or not he had committed any crime, what whim had caused him to become a country pedagogue, whether he had been insane all the time or just at the end, all, all is mystery.

MRS. SPETIGUE'S MATCH-MAKING.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

"THERE, Dora, I've made your pa agree to it, at last! I knew I should bring him round in time—but it has been such hard work, that I'm most beat out!" And portly Mrs. Spettigue dropped, panting, into the chair where her daughter Dora's pretty new summer hat was reposing.

"La, child, never mind your hat!—there's plenty more. You don't seem to realize that your father has struck oil, in three places, and the wells a pumpin' a thousand barrels a day? And says I to him, three months ago, when he first struck, 'pa,' says I, 'Dora ought to see something of the world! 'You're a rich man, now, pa,' says I, 'and it wont do for Dora to marry Jo Simpson, or Job Hodgkins, or any of them fellers; she's a beauty, and an heiress, pa,' says I, 'and she ought to marry a nobleman, or the president's son, at least. Why, wasn't I a readin' only last night, Dora, that a Miss Stevens was a goin' to marry the Duke of Montrose, and her pa was only a hotel-keeper like your pa, Dora!'"

Dora had rescued her hat, and was trying to bend it into its original shape; but her color did heighten, and her eyes shine as her mother went on.

"Your pa never did have no ambition, Dora, but I do hope there's a little Robinson to you! If you was clear Spettigue, I should expect you to be willing to marry Job Hodgkins, and settle down here in Shamberg, a strugglin' with poverty and ten children, all your life!"

Probably there was "a little Robinson to" Dora, for she heaved a sigh at that prospect.

"I always had an impression that you'd be a great lady, Dora. I felt it when you was a little mite of a baby. The Robinsons was always great for impressions; we could always feel in our bones what was a goin' to happen, and—"

"How am I going to see anything of the world?" interrupted Dora. You always had to interrupt Mrs. Spettigue, if you wanted to bring her to the point.

"Says I to pa, 'Dora shall go to Saratoga this summer, and you and I shall go with her,' and says he—"

"Are we really going to Saratoga?" cried Dora, clasping her hands, and letting the hat drop forgotten to the floor—though Job Hodgkins had said only last night, that it was very becoming.

"Jest as soon as we can get ready!—but first you and I must make a journey to Pittsburgh, and buy a lot of handsome clothes. We must let it be seen that your pa is rich, and we can't help makin' a sensation, and if there's a nobleman, or a senator, or a governor there, you'll be sure to catch him, Dora!"

"Ma, you don't seem to remember that there'll be lots of prettier girls than I there, and this is such a rough part of the country—we haven't manners like other people, and we shall only be laughed at!"

"Laughed at! well, if that isn't a pretty to-do! I should like to know if your pa didn't send you a year to the Blairsville Seminary, when he could hardly afford it, and you ought to have a beautiful education, and as for manners the Robinsons was always said to have better manners—"

"O yes, I have no doubt we should get along well enough," said Dora, hastening to appease her mother's indignation. "And I *should* like to go!"

Anybody who saw Dora at that moment would doubt very much whether she would find "lots of prettier girls" at Saratoga. She had a bright gipsyish face, with a clear olive skin and eyes as black as sloes, yet her hair was light enough to have a dash of gold in it. She had a light lithe supple-like little figure, and "a way with her," that bewitched everybody.

It was hardly to be wondered at that the "Robinson ambition had been aroused in Mrs. Spettigue by her daughter's beauty, now that wealth had come to give her an opportunity to display it.

Dora was thinking that it would be nice to be a great lady. But there was a little doubt in her mind that was by no means in her mother's mind. She was not sure that it would be any nicer to be a great lady, than to be Job Hodgkins's wife!

Now Job was only a clerk in Hodgkins and Hubbards' grocery store. He had been "paying attention" to Dora, ever since she came home from Blairsville Seminary, almost two years ago, and until pa "struck oil" Mrs. Spettigue had looked rather favorably upon him. To be sure he wasn't good enough for her Dora—who was?—but he was as "likely" a young man as there was in Shamberg, and would probably take his uncle's place in the firm, in the course of time. As for "pa," he always declared that Job Hodgkins was "as smart as a steel trap," and there "wasn't a young man in the county that he would rather have for a son-in-law." But now all that was changed. "Pa" was an oil prince. A thousand barrels of oil per day had disturbed the course of true love—now bidding fair to choke up its channel entirely. For the doubt gradually grew less in Dora's mind, as she reflected. The splendors that rose before her dimmed poor Job's image in her mind. Mrs. Spettigue, watching her daughter intently, was satisfied that "the Robinson in her" was beginning to work, and she heaved a sigh of relief; for she had not been without her fears that a fancy for Job Hodgkins might interfere with the brilliant plans which she had formed for Dora's future.

In the meantime, Job was wending his way across the fields, dressed in his Sunday best, and switching the tops off the daisies

with a smart little cane—a recent purchase; for Job, not naturally given to such frivolities, was just now trying to find favor in Dora's eyes by assuming a little "style." He had made up his mind that Dora should give him an answer on this night. She was a good deal of a coquette, and had been smiling, of late, on several new importations, drawn to Shamberg by oil, as well as on his old-time rival Jo Simpson. Job loved her with all his honest heart, but he "wasn't going to be trifled with." At least, that was what he said to himself.

Dora was clothed in a ravishing white muslin, and greater dignity than usual. She declined his invitation to go to walk rather curtly:

"I am very busy getting ready to go to Saratoga," she said, as quietly as if she had been to Saratoga every summer of her life. And she looked sharply at Job to see how he took it. But Job didn't grow pale in the least, or show any signs of emotion, as the little minx hoped he would. He only whistled—a long wh-e-w that was provokingly indifferent.

"It is very impolite to whistle before ladies," said Dora.

"But I am not going to Saratoga; it doesn't matter so much about my manners!" responded Job, coolly.

Dora was not accustomed to being snubbed in that way, especially by Job. She answered only by a haughty little toss of her head.

"I am only going to the Black Hills," pursued Job.

"To the Black Hills! Dora *did* turn pale, though she tried, with all her might, to look indifferent.

"Next week—a party of five or six of us. I suppose I may be lucky. I don't care whether I ever come back or not. There's one thing that would keep me at home, now; Dora, you know what that is."

"I'm sure I don't know how I should know," responded Dora, who was not to be scared out of her coquetry by all the Black Hills in the universe.

"Be my wife, Dora, and Shamberg will be good enough for me."

The Black Hills were dreadful—a vision of Indian tomahawks danced before Dora's eyes; but that last clause of Job's was an unfortunate one. She *couldn't* live in Shamberg all her days!

"If that's the only thing that will keep

you at home, I don't see but that you'll have to go!"

"You are sure of it, Dora?—sure that you won't change your mind?"

"If I do I'll let you know!" said Dora, saucily.

She was sorry for it the next moment, when he had turned away without a word, and she saw him disappearing in the distance; sorry that she had been quite so rude to him. But then what business had he to be so conceited as to imply that she might be in love with him, after all?

And then she went to her mother, and helped her plan out the finery they should have to carry to Saratoga.

And Job went to the Black Hills.

Three weeks after, behold the Spettigue family at Saratoga, "pa" very much out of his element, Mrs. Spettigue a good deal awed, and very much disappointed at the lack of noblemen, Dora elated by her fine clothes, and the admiration she received, yet depressed by the consciousness that there were a good many people in the hotel not too wellbred to sneer openly at her father and mother, who had not even enjoyed the advantages of Blairsville Seminary.

But diamonds will hide greater faults than a lack of acquaintance with Lindley Murray, at Saratoga, and there were few who *outblazed* Mrs. Spettigue and Dora. The latter did not want for beaux. If there had been a nobleman there, very likely he would have been at her feet, but alas! for Mrs. Spettigue's ambition, there was not one to be found!

But by the end of a fortnight she had almost come to the conclusion that Mr. Reginald De Courcy was as good as a nobleman; he was very near to being one, indeed. He was an Englishman, and own cousin to a lord. He was most distingue in appearance, too, and his devotion made Dora an object of envy among the young ladies. Altogether Mrs. Spettigue was satisfied when, at the end of three weeks, he proposed to Dora and was accepted. "Pa," too, was delighted with the grandeur and condescension of his proposed son-in-law, who devoted himself to him with almost as great zeal as he did to Dora.

As for Dora, she was the most dazzled, and bewildered, and wretched little moth that ever flew into a glittering candle.

She couldn't refuse Mr. De Courcy; how

could she when it was such a splendid match for her?—the very thing that she had been brought to Saratoga for! He was very handsome and elegant, and, judging by his conversation, very rich. It was wonderfully good fortune for her, as her mother said. And yet Dora was haunted by Job's face, and the Black Hills lay heavy on her heart!

She was glad when they turned their backs on Saratoga, though she had enjoyed the gayety and the admiration she received, glad when the train whizzed them off, and left the elegant Mr. De Courcy making his final adieux, with a most sentimentally sad expression on his handsome face. But he was to follow them to Shamberg, in a few weeks. Mrs. Spettigue had put off the ardent lover, who wished to follow immediately, in order to make things at home more presentable. The fastidious Mr. De Courcy, the cousin of a lord, might be shocked beyond recovery at the rough style of living that prevailed at Shamberg.

But Dora gave little heed to the overturning and furbishing up, that went vigorously on in the next three weeks. She had made up her mind to marry Mr. De Courcy, and she would do it, but just now what she wanted was to hear some news of Job Hodgkins, risking his life at the Black Hills!

Not a word could she hear; none of the young men with whom he had gone lived in Shamberg, she knew none of their friends; and Job's uncle had quarrelled with him for going, and held no communication with him.

He had dropped out of Dora's life as completely as if those awful hills had swallowed him up.

But Mr. De Courcy, and society, and wealth, and beauty, and admiration, were left; was not that enough for any reasonable girl?

Dora tried very hard to think so, at any rate, and put on her brightest face and her most stylish dress, to greet Mr. De Courcy when he came.

Shamberg did not seem to shock Mr. De Courcy. He was blandly oblivious of the want of elegance about the home of his idol, and waved away all Mrs. Spettigue's apologies with charming suavity. If Dora was not in love with Mr. De Courcy, Mrs. Spettigue and "pa" were.

He was so much interested in the oil business, he complimented "pa," so highly

upon his shrewdness—good, honest, simple “pa,” to whom wealth had come purely by chance, and who had as much shrewdness as a baby. He would even like to try a little speculation in oil himself, if he were not just now a little embarrassed by delay in receiving some funds which he expected from England: “Pa” modestly ventured to suggest a little loan. The great gentleman wouldn’t mind accepting a little something in that way.

To make a long story short, he succeeded in borrowing about twenty thousand dollars of unsuspecting “pa,” and then, “one morn they missed him on the accustomed hill!” It was late in November when that happened, and Dora’s bridal trousseau was nearly completed. Her shame and humiliation were almost unendurable, and yet there was a feeling of relief that helped her to bear them; “pa” was happy in the thought that he had saved his daughter, if he had lost his “ducats,” but Mrs. Spettigue was inconsolable. It was not until the middle of the winter that she revived sufficiently to plan a tour to Washington, in search of another matrimonial “prize;” and then Dora was obdurate, and absolutely refused to go.

She had grown pale and wan, and moved about the house with a step that was very

unlike the Dora of old—the Dora who was Job Hodgkins’s sweetheart. “Pa” began to be afraid that “the scamp” had carried away his daughter’s heart, but Mrs. Spettigue knew better than that. She had keener eyes than “pa,” and had seen Job Hodgkins and the Black Hills written on Dora’s heart even while she was trying her best to marry her to Mr. De Courcy!

So when, one day in the early summer, a bronzed and bearded stranger, yet with a gait that was Job Hodgkins’s own, was seen coming across the field, Mrs. Spettigue dropped despairingly into a chair, applied a handkerchief to her eyes, and murmured:

“It’s no use a strugglin’ agin Providence! She’s a clear Spettigue, and I give her up!”

“Well, Dora, I have come back from the Black Hills,” said Job, in much the same tone in which he had announced his intention of going there, the summer before.

“And I’ve come back from Saratoga!” said Dora, meekly, and with a blush of shame.

The next words she was heard to say were:

“O Job, you are too good to me! I don’t deserve it!”

And to be sure she didn’t—but that is Job’s affair, not mine.

MY METAMORPHOSE.

BY N. P. DARLING.

Boggs, Moggs and I had partaken of a grand supper at Holland's, at Doggs's expense. We had everything to eat, and something to drink. If I remember rightly, there was considerable "flowing bowl" round that night, and if I am not mistaken, "flowing bowl," when taken in large quantities, is "slightually" intoxicating. I was not aware before that night, that Boggs was such a superior vocalist. He sang "We wont go home till morning," with such feeling, such pathos, that it fairly brought the tears to Moggs's eyes. Even I felt slightly melted.

Well, we didn't go home till morning. At least, it was after two o'clock before we left Holland's. I think that Boggs and Moggs were slightly elevated. They went off together, arm-in-arm. Methinks "I see them on their winding way." I started for home alone. As I wandered on, a peculiar feeling came over my soul:

"A feeling of sadness and longing
That is not akin to pain,

And resembles sorrows only
As the mists resemble rain."

All my past life came up before me in review. I am forty years of age now, but involuntarily my thoughts wandered back to the days of my youth. "I thought of her I loved so well—those early broken ties," as the song says. Yes, I had loved, and alas! I had been false to my vows. I was only twenty-two then. Betsey Jane was eighteen. She was pretty as a pink, and I was ditto. We were a handsome couple, everybody said, and I was looking forward anxiously to the day when we should be one; for Betsey Jane had told me that her heart was all my own.

"Same here, Betsey Jane," said I, placing my hand upon my bosom. "Nothing can tear thy dear image from my heart."

"Can I trust you, Jonas?" Betsey asked.
"Till death, Betsey Jane." (That's what Sniggs, the tailor, is doing.)

That seemed to restore her confidence, and she laid her head upon my bosom.

'Tis sweet to love and feel that that love is returned. Betsey Jane Streeter and I luxuriated in the sweetness for about three months, and then, ah then! the Widow Maveth came to town. She was two years my senior, but she was bewitchingly beautiful, and what was of more consequence to a poor young man like myself, she was worth ten thousand dollars.

The Widow Maveth had bought the Badean estate. I was hired to carry on the farm. When Betsey Jane Streeter heard of that, she had a premonition of evil. I tried to restore her confidence, but I could not.

"Widows are dangerous to young men of your organization, Jonas," she said.

"Do you think I would forsake you now, darling?" I asked.

"All men are false," she replied in a mournful tone.

"But I ain not. I swear—"

"Don't swear, Jonas."

"Well, if I am false to you, Betsey Jane, I hope I may become a *Cochin-China rooster* the next minute!"

(Twenty years have passed since I made that wish, but I trembled as I thought of it.)

"Don't be rash, Jonas. Human nature is weak," Betsey Jane said, with a shudder. She was thinking how I would look if I was taken at my word.

The widow had cast her eyes upon me. She found that I was comely to look upon. She admired my form—she was ravished with the beauty of my face. From that moment my doom was sealed. Betsey Jane was right. Widows are dangerous to young men of my organization. They have a peculiar charm about them that other women have not. I felt that charm. It was too much for my poor weak human nature. Perhaps, my dear reader, you have a great deal of confidence in yourself, and feel that you could defy a score of widows—perhaps you could, but I doubt it. The Widow Maveth used to fix her loving eyes upon me. Every glance said, as plain as words, "Why don't you?" Will any sane man look me in the face, and say he could stand that? I couldn't. I threw myself at the widow's feet.

"Make me happy," I said.

"I'll make you miserable," said she.

"I love you."

"I intended that you should."

"Will you marry me?"

"Yes, of course."

"Bless you, darling!" I cried, but just then I thought of Betsey Jane Streeter, and the Cochin China rooster, and a sensation of pain thrilled through me, I thought I felt the pin-feathers starting! "O horrors!" I looked at the widow. That "why don't you?" look came into her eyes, and I could not resist it; I bent down and kissed her red ripe lips. Betsey Jane had never kissed like that. It set my blood on fire. I clasped her in my arms, and promised to love her forever.

The Widow Maveth and I were married just two weeks from that day. Betsey Jane Streeter fled from the town the same day, and no one knew where she went. Perhaps she had committed suicide. It was terrible to think, that if such was the case, I was the sole cause for the rash act.

The Widow Maveth when she became my wife, was as good as her word—she made me miserable. I felt that Betsey Jane was avenged. I thought of all these things as I walked home that night, after leaving Boggs and Moggs.

When I reached home all of my family had retired, but the fire was not out in the grate. I put on more coals, and sat down before it, and as it was rather chilly, I threw my son's army overcoat around me, to keep me comfortable until the fire should get under headway. Better stay here, thought I, than to take a curtain lecture from Mrs. Terwilliger, which I was sure of, if I went to bed.

It must have been near three o'clock in the morning. The house was still as death. I took up a book and began reading, and was soon lost to everything else. Suddenly I heard a loud rap on the table beside me. I started up, but nothing was to be seen. I looked under the table with no better success. What could it be? I am not at all superstitious. I had heard of spiritual rappings, but believed nothing in such manifestations. Perhaps some departed spirit has returned to convince me, I thought. "I'll ask the question anyhow," said I. "There can be no harm in that."

"Is there any spirit present that wishes to communicate with me?" I questioned, my voice trembling terribly.

"Jonas Terwilliger!" in tones that froze the blood in my veins.

I looked wildly around, but nothing could I see. The voice sounded familiar to me. Where had I heard it before? It can't be

my wife trying to frighten me. No, it was not her voice.

"Jonas Terwilliger, I have come!" the voice said again.

My knees trembled under me, but I popped out the first thing that came into my head:

"I don't see it."

"Behold!"

I looked toward the further corner of the room. It was almost dark, so far from the light; but as I gazed, the shadow of a woman's face, pale and cold, looked out of the gloom. Her eyes gleamed with an unearthly light, that seemed to freeze the marrow in my bones. Her long fair hair fell down over her white shoulders. Her pale blue lips were parted, and I saw her white teeth glistening between them.

"Do you know me?" the same terrible voice asked.

"Know you?" I cried. "Yes, yes, it is, it is my own Betsey Jane!" and I fell back into the grate; but every one knows that there is something peculiarly reviving about hot coals when applied to some parts of our person. I instantly regained my perpendicular.

"Yes, I am Betsey Jane Streeter—the bride of Death!"

My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. The perspiration covered every part of my body, while cold chills chased each other up and down my spinal column.

"Why have you come to torment me?" I cried.

"Revenge!" those pale lips hissed. "Revenge!"

"You are avenged, Betsey Jane," I faltered. "I have not seen a happy day since I lost you."

"'Tis not enough! 'tis not enough!"

"Pity me, Betsey Jane. By the love you once bore me, I implore you."

"You had no pity for me—I will have none for you!" in a cold sepulchral voice.

"I have repented in sackcloth and ashes."

"'Tis not enough!"

Slowly the shadow advanced toward me. As she came out of the gloom, I noticed that she was dressed in the style of twenty years ago. In fact, she wore the same calico dress that she had worn when I had last seen her in the flesh. As she advanced, her thin clawlike fingers were stretched out toward me.

"Do not touch me!" I shrieked. "I will

do anything that you command, only do not come near me."

"Jonas Ter-will-i-ger," with a terrible accent upon every syllable, "do you remember your vow?"

"Yes, yes," but do not touch me. I—I beg your pardon, ma'am. I'm sorry, indeed I am, Miss Streeter."

"But you never felt the sorrow that I have felt. You never suffered the anguish of soul that I have suffered. If you proved false to me, you hoped—"

"Do not come near me!" I cried again.

"I must clasp thee in these arms, Jonas. I must lay this head upon thy bosom, and you must kiss these pale blue lips!"

"O horrors! Anything but that," and I sprang upon the table.

"Do you remember your last words to me, Jonas Terwilliger? Do you remember?"

"If you proved false to me, you hoped you might become a *Cochin China rooster!* Dost thou remember, O mortal?"

"I do, but spare me, spare me, Betsey Jane!" I shrieked, in agony.

"Never, never! I have sworn to be revenged!"

"Remember your love for me."

"It is turned to hate."

"Have you no pity in your heart?"

"None, Jonas Terwilliger. You ask for pity—hast thou pity me? Prepare!"

"For what?"

"Thy doom! Thou shalt be a *Cochin China rooster*, and chicken dough shalt thou eat all the days of thy life!"

She waved her thin white hand. I felt a prickly sensation all over my body, and knew that the pin-feathers were starting. But strange as it may seem, my calmness returned to me, and with a feeling of quiet despair, I submitted to my fate.

I stood directly in front of the mirror, and so had an excellent opportunity to watch the change that was coming over me. Slowly my hair assumed a perpendicular, slowly it changed from a beautiful brown to a blood-red hue. Can it be possible? Yes, it was a rooster's comb! I raised my hand to my whiskers—alas! they were *gills*. My hand fell with a loud flap to my side, and cocking my head to one side, I saw that my arm was covered with long bright feathers of rainbow hues. I attempted to bury my face in my hands, but I could only flap my wings in despair. I attempted to speak to Betsey Jane, but I could only mutter, "Cut-

ty-ca-r-r-ow-ow." Turning to the mirror, I saw that my nose had changed to a bill nearly a foot and a half long! It is impossible for me to describe the feeling of despair that came over me. My head fell upon my breast, and looking down, I saw a long spur growing out of each ankle joint, while my feet were changed to immense claws. All over my body glistened feathers of red, brown and green; and glancing over my shoulder, I beheld a sight that made me shudder—there was a growth of feathers of all colors, at least five feet in length, the ends of which curved very gracefully, the tips of them dangling against my spurs. I looked toward the shadow of Betsey Jane, and stretched out my wing imploringly; but she laughed in scorn.

"Now crow," she said. "Crow, or I'll wing your neck."

I crowed. The poet speaks of the "cock's loud clarion," but you should have heard mine! I think it was the tallest specimen of crowing that ever was heard. As I closed my bill, I flapped my wings in the most approved style.

"That's very well done," said Betsey Jane, with a fiendish chuckle, "but it isn't quite up to the mark. You must try again. Now expand your lungs. Are you ready?"

"Ca-r-r-ow," said I.

"One, two, three—crow."

Again my clarion notes filled the room, and again I flapped my beautiful wings.

"Excellent!" exclaimed Betsey Jane Streeter. "With a very little practice you will excel all your feathered brothers."

Even a rooster likes praise. I tried to smile, but it is hard work to grin when you've nothing but a bill to do it with, and so I jingled my gills in a humorous manner, and winked at Betsey Jane.

"You are a very handsome rooster," she said, looking upon me with admiration. "You never looked so well before in your life."

Again I jingled my gills.

"What a splendid dinner you'll make for your wife and family next Thanksgiving day!"

Horrid thought! My bill turned a trifle paler than usual, and those tall feathers at my back trembled with terror.

"I'd like a slice off your breast with oys-

ter sauce," Betsey Jane continued, perceiving my agitation; "and one of your drumsticks wouldn't be objectionable."

I attempted to say "How can you?" But—well, perhaps you've heard a rooster say that, and if so, you know how I succeeded.

"Well, I must hear you crow once more, and then I shall be obliged to leave you, for Mrs. Terwilliger will be out here soon, and put you in the hencoop," she said, while a fiendish smile played upon her face. "Now take a long breath—expand your chest. That's right. One, two, three, crow!"

"Cockadoodledoo!"

"Wasn't that a stunner?" thought I; but just then I felt some one shake my wing. I flapped them both and crowed again with all my might, throwing my head back, and opening my bill to its widest extent.

"Jonas Terwilliger!" I opened my eyes.

"Bully!" a childish voice cried.

"The deuce!" said I, rubbing my eyes, and looking around upon my family, from my perch on the table.

"Are you awake now?" asked my wife.

"Awake? Ah, then I've been dreaming, have I?"

"Yes, I should think you had. You've been perched upon the table, trying to crow, you old fool, with your whole family laughing at you. You knew better than to try to crow while you were awake, and I was near."

"Flap your wings again, papa," said my youngest.

"Get down from that table," cried my wife, "and when you want to play rooster again, go into the henhouse."

I did get down immediately, and throwing off the overcoat, the cape of which had furnished wings for me, I left the room. I've felt rather crestfallen since, and have found it very difficult to preserve the dignity of the "head of the family" at home; and when I attempt to punish my son Bob, he always runs away, and getting upon the table, flaps his arms, and crows. It is unnecessary to say that I never stay to hear him crow twice.

The moral of the tale is easily to be seen. Young man, if you are courting some pretty Betsey Jane, think of my story, and beware. Furthermore, beware of widows!

MY PLAIN SISTER CLARE.

BY AUGUST BELL.

CLARE just came into the room and brought me a vase of roses. She only staid a moment. I hear her down stairs now singing in her odd little earnest way. People say Clare is growing handsome; it does not appear so to me, for she is almost as freckled as ever, and her mouth, as we have always owned, is rather too large. But I am beginning to feel, in a vague sort of way, that there are other rules than mine for judging beauty.

Just such a day as this a year ago, I stood before my mirror dressing for callers, for it was mamma's reception-day. I was wondering whether Hunt Baring had come back to the city yet from his summer vacation at the seaside, where I had first met him, and instinctively I found myself selecting from my wardrobe the ruby silk he had so much admired, and for ornaments my set of great glowing carbuncles. How the summer days seemed to live in my heart, the strolls on the beach, the moonlight sails, the gay hops at the hotel, my little throng of attendants, and Hunt Baring aloof from them all, yet more potent than them all.

It was fortunate that I wore my ruby silk that day, for an hour after he called, and the summer renewed itself. There were other callers laughing and talking with me, so that he was rather silent among them all at first, for Hunt never cares much for little gossip sensations; but I felt he was watching me all the time. I think he liked

to look at me as he would at a picture. After the rest had gone I played for him. I had just been learning a concerto of Schumann's, one that Alide Topp has played in public so beautifully, and I know that I played it well, too, for I never missed a note, and my teacher had told me that I kept time perfectly. So I played it all through for Hunt Baring, and he looked at me curiously.

"How you elude me!" he said. "I thought I should get a glimpse of your soul in your playing, but you keep it all back. Your touch on the keys is so cold and airy! Why don't you put something more into it, Miss Vivian?"

I did not know how to answer him, for I played it exactly as M. Berger had taught me, and always minded the marks of *pianissimo* and *con espressione*. So for lack of words I looked up in his face and smiled. He answered as if I had spoken, saying:

"Then sing me that little sad thing you sang once on the shore at twilight last summer at Nahant."

So I played an accompaniment and sang

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray sands, O Sea!"

through all the four sorrowful verses of it. It is a sad little thing, and was never a favorite of mine. I have always wished to shun sadness. But still it suited my voice, and Hunt liked it. When I finished he laid

his hand on mine; his eyes had grown dark and passionate. In another moment he would have said that he loved me; to this day I have always felt sure of it, but Clare suddenly entered the room, and that checked him. She came straight up to me.

"I did not know you had company, Vivian," she said in that blunt way she has at times. "Mamma's head aches fearfully, I am afraid she is going to be ill, and I want you to stay with her while I go out for a doctor. I am so sorry Dr. Rawley is out of town!"

"Under such circumstances if I can be of any service, command me! Allow me to introduce myself," said my visitor, handing Clare his card at the same time; "Hunt Baring, M. D."

"This is very fortunate," she said, simply. "I shall be glad to have you come up stairs with me to see her."

He went with her at once, leaving me there at the piano to twirl over my music leaves and drum a few bars here and there. It seemed to me so absurd, just like Clare's always unconventional behaviour. I grew tired of waiting after a while and followed them up stairs.

Mamma's door was partly open, and I stood there a moment before I went in. How pale she looked, and unlike herself, with that wet towel about her forehead. But then, she had had headaches before; surely this was no more than usual.

"You should not have gone down to the parlor to-day," Hunt Baring was saying. "Perfect quiet was what you needed."

He wrote a prescription for her, and gave it to Clare with directions. Then turning, he left the room, and compelled me by a glance to accompany him down stairs.

When we reached the parlor, he spoke. There was typhoid fever around; perhaps mother was not threatened with it, still we needed to be careful of her. In the absence of Dr. Rawley would we wish him to attend her?

"Why, certainly;" I answered that at once, and he promised to call the next morning. Then when I would have turned to the piano again, he checked me. Music must wait, he said, till the suffering one was well. I ought to have thought of that, but I had never been used to sickness.

He came the next day, and the next. He came daily for five long weeks, for mamma did have the fever, and Clare believes that

Dr. Baring's care saved her life. Well, perhaps it did, Clare had opportunities of knowing, for she hardly ever left the sickroom. She is a born nurse, tireless, cheerful, anticipating every need. And you would not believe how strong those little hands of hers are! So different from me. In a sickroom I lose all power. I become weak, nervous, useless—and so it happened that every day I sat idly in the parlor, waiting for Hunt Baring, always prettily dressed, and always glad to see him, while up stairs Clare met him with a pale face and anxious sleepless eyes. She looked plainer than ever, she was so pale, and she wore one of her oldest dresses all the time because it did not rustle.

The day that the crisis of the fever passed, and Dr. Baring told us that mamma would recover, Clare fainted away for the first time in her life. He called to me to see her, but what could I do? It took me five minutes to find the camphor to begin with, so he staid and took care of her himself.

At last mamma was quite well, and the house brightened. I played and sang again, callers thronged the parlor once more, Clare slipped placidly back to her old pursuits, and life seemed gayer than ever. Only—Hunt Baring no longer came!

"I mean to set up for an invalid," I said one day, jesting, "and then Dr. Baring will come to see me every day again!"

"Do you care for him so much, Vivian?" asked Clare, with a curious inexplicable expression in her gray eyes.

"As a child for a butterfly!" I answered, recklessly. Why should I tell Clare how my heart ached, and my soul cried out at his absence.

One day he came. I stopped to fasten a scarlet flower in my hair, and so Clare met him first. As I came down the stairs I heard him saying in a strangely tender voice:

"Are you glad to see me, little one, precious one?"

I walked into the parlor and interrupted them. How Clare blushed, and in Hunt Baring's eyes, as they bent upon her, was that same look which once, for a flying moment, rested on me. But something told me that this time the look would never alter.

I laughed, and going to the piano played a grand march. I do not think they ever knew I cared. Only when they were engaged, Hunt Baring and my sister Clare, I

went away and made some long promised visits which took up all the rest of the winter and half of the spring.

Now I am at home again, and laugh and sing and am the life of the house, though I hear people whisper that Vivian Grey has grown thinner and older in a year. While they call Clare almost handsome!

What if she should ever suspect, should ever find out! That would be the last drop of bitterness! Why did she give me that quiet loving kiss when she brought in the roses!

It is all for the best; she deserves what I have lost. Courage, heart, learn thy lesson, and be strong!



MY EXPERIENCE AT CHURCH.

BY PATENT COUPLER.

I AM sorry to say it, but it is seldom that I go to church. The other Sunday morning, however, I thought I would go. A number of improvements had been made, since last I had been, and it was, ashamed as I am to confess it, nearly as much to see these as to hear the Gospel. You see, I had been out west for a number of years and had got out of the notion. I arose early, on this Sabbath, and hurried up the folk. They all wanted to know what was wrong, and my brother wanted to bet me five dollars that I thought it was a week day. When I said it was my intention to go to church they made no reply. They were completely surprised.

Arriving at the church I entered and found I was early. The janitor was the only person there.

"When do the doors open?" I asked.

"They are now open," he answered.

"When does the show commence?" I asked.

"Sir?"

"Do you not understand?" I asked.

"When does the curtain go up?"

He looked at me in astonishment, and said:

"Where do you think you are?"

"Where do I think I am? In a church, of course. Did you think I thought it was an ice house?"

He made no answer.

"Will you tell me when the ball opens; or will you not?" said I.

"The hour of service is ten o'clock, sir," said he, solemn as a priest.

It was only nine o'clock, and I sat down on the stairs leading to the gallery, and taking out my knife commenced to whittle the railing.

"You must stop that," said he; "or I will request you to leave."

I put my knife in my pocket, and went

up stairs, strolling through the gallery, wondering why a gruff old fellow like him should be employed.

The organ was in the gallery, and as I had never been so near one before, I was prompted, by curiosity, to see how it worked. The key was in the lock of the doors which shut in the key board, and I opened it, and was just getting interested in the workings, when the janitor touched me on the shoulder, and said:

"Can not allow that, sir. You must stop this foolin' with things."

He hurt my feelings; but I made no answer.

I wandered down stairs, and found my way into the basement. The new heating apparatus was here located. The engineer had gotten up steam and had gone to some other part of the building. I opened the door of the fire box and peered in. I was figuring how long it would take to cremate in there, when some one touched me on the back, and said:

"Come, now. I have had enough of your foolin'. You get right away from here!"

I turned and beheld the janitor. Was he a man? or was he a spirit to thus haunt me?

I concluded he was a man, and a very mean one to thus follow me around. But I did not say anything. I felt he was on his own premises, whereas I was only a seeker after truth.

I went up stairs again, and as the congregation had commenced to arrive, I went inside the body of the church, and was about to sit down in a pew, when a young man fixed up in his black clothes, and a stand up collar, said:

"Right this way, sir; right this way."

I followed him up the aisle. He stopped by a pew in which were two young ladies

sitting. Ushers had been adopted by the church since last I had been, and this young man was one, but I did not then know it.

"Ah!" thought I; "he is 'taken' with my appearance, and wishes to make me acquainted with his sisters."

I seated myself in the pew, and edging up to the young ladies remarked that it was a lovely day.

They turned and gazed at me but made no reply.

"Bashful, eh?" said I.

Just here the young man seated another gentleman in the pew.

"I will not stand this," said I to myself. "If he thinks I am not competent to entertain them both, he is mistaken."

So I leaned back in the pew and said nothing more to either of them.

In a little while the preacher came in, and after praying and the choir singing, and another prayer, the play began in earnest. The sermon did not interest me much, and to keep awake I read a card, which was tacked in the pew, a number of times over. As near as I can remember it read as follows:

COLLECTIONS DURING THE YEAR.

Sunday, Jan. 7—For the heathen.

Sunday, Jan. 14—For the heathen.

Sunday, Jan. 19—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Jan. 28—For library.

Sunday, Feb. 5—For the heathen.

Sunday, Feb. 12—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Feb. 19—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Feb. 26—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Mar. 2—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Mar. 9—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Mar. 22—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Mar. 29—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Apr. 5—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, Apr. 12—Foreign missions.

Sunday, Apr. 19—Pastor's salary.

Sunday, Apr. 26—Janitor's salary.

Sunday, May 1—Gas.

Sunday, May 8—Church debt.

Sunday, May 15—For the heathen.

Sunday, May 28—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, June 4—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, June 11—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, June 18—Incidental expenses.

Sunday, June 25—Incidental expenses.

And so on for July, August, September, October, November and December.

As I finished reading the card for the eighth time, the contribution box was passed me. I took out two-dollars, and was about

dropping it on the plate, when I remembered that the collection to-day was for "janitor's salary," and I put it right back in my purse, vowing I would let the old man starve before he should have a cent of my money.

I was just going off into a doze when the preacher startled me. I had a distinct idea that I was not a saint. I never robbed bees' nests, but I knew I was not a good man. I believed I was a sort of a common bad man. That is, neither good nor bad; but not till then did I know I was fit to be roasted like a peanut, and cracked in the jaws of the Devil. The preacher said I was—that we all were. He said Hell was right below us, and all that was wanting was for the underpinning to fall out and let us drop down. I was sleepy, but when I heard this it drove sleep and "incidental expenses" from my mind.

I was considering how to get out of the situation the preacher said I was in, when I looked around and saw Smithering, one of the meanest men living, and who professed to be a Christian, and as the preacher said Christians need not fear, and as Smithering was a Christian, I said to myself:

"I am not afraid. If it is possible for that thribble extract of low Scandinavian meanness to keep out, I can!"

It is now time for poets to commence writing about "Spring."

Hip hurrah! For President of the United States of America, Buffalo Bill!

February is a beautiful month. It is a—
a—. Yes it is a beautiful month.

This is the month when old maids have their feelings harrowed, by receiving a valentine with a pug nose.

This is leap year, so called because old maids make a leap for rich widowers, and bachelors.

Mrs. Gen. Phil. Sheridan: "No, sir, Philip. You can not have any more of my hair pins to pick your ears. You bend them so."

This is the time of year when young children can go skating, and fall through "air holes" in the ice.

This is the season when boarding-house keepers watch every mouthful taken by the boarders. — Butter thirty-eight cents a pound.

Charley Ross has been found. He was working as an ostler in Boston.

The students of Michigan University sometimes seize the quill, dip it deep in the bloody ink, and write. The following is a sample verse of a "poem," recently read in one of their society club rooms:

"Pan-cake time has come again,
The wind does rave and howl,
Greek and Latin thrown aside
To go out and hunt the owl."

The Centennial year is upon us. Prepare to hear nothing, read nothing, or talk of anything, but how we whipped "Hold Hengland."

"Have you any camphor?" she plaintively inquired, as she stood before the desk.

She wasn't a feeble-looking woman. No woman can look feeble until her weight has been reduced to less than a hundred and sixty pounds.

"No, madam, we haven't," replied his honor; "we are just out of camphor."

"My brain whirls so," she sighed, "and I feel so trembly and weak."

"Can't be a fever coming on, can it?"

"I—I fear it is."

"Let me see your tongue, Mrs. Johnson?"

She thrust out her tongue, and he bent over the desk and surveyed it.

"Hem—hem—um. Your tongue doesn't betray your illness, madam."

"But I feel faint."

"Bijah may hold you up while this trial goes on, or you can sit down. The charge is disturbing the peace. You came near biting your neighbor's ear off."

"It's a lie!" she squeaked, her eyes snapping fire.

"Now, Mrs. Johnson, let me say to you that I shall insist upon ladylike conduct on your part, and if I can't secure it I'll send you up without a trial."

"Where's the neighbor?" she demanded.

"There is the man, and there is the ear," he replied.

A small red-headed man rose up and squeaked:

"You done it—you done it—you done it!"

As the sun riseth and lighteth up the world by day, and as the moon riseth and striveth to outshine the sun, by night; so do all magazines endeavor to impress upon the public that they are the best. Ballou's Monthly Magazine is acknowledged to be the best. One dollar and a half a year, in advance.

Bill Allen, the defeated candidate for the Ohio Governorship, says he does not care a green watermelon if he has been beaten, and in this mood he sits down and writes:

"The 'rag-baby' is dead,
I have a sore head,
But I do not give up in despair.
My head was made sore,
By my wife, who, great gore,
Pulled out each and all of my hair."

"Do you say I bit your ear?"

"You did—you did—you did!"

"O Mr. Judge," she cried, wringing her hands, "I never bit a man's ear in my life!"

"It seems that you owed him money and wouldn't pay," explained the court, "and when he called again yesterday you attacked him on the steps, pushed him down, and in the struggle which followed you bit his ear."

"My head swims so!" she gasped.

"All of which wasn't right, and you know it," continued the court. "The laws of Michigan were made for small men with red hair as well as for other people, and I deem it my duty to fine you ten dollars!"

"Did I ever!" she gasped.

"I guess you did."

"But will you fine me ten dollars for nothing?"

"I will!"

She seemed about to faint, but changed her mind, pulled out a roll of money, and as she pitched an "X" to the clerk, she said:

"I'll see that red-headed man again!"

And when she had gone, Bijah softly said:

"Fellow-countrymen, the grist has been ground, and we will now despatch ourselves to our devious homes."

And in the blinding storm the boys gathered at the fire-plug and sang:

If I was a red-headed man,
My fate I should ever bewail;
My will I would make, some pizen I'd take,
And the papers my death would detail.

NAOMI'S JOURNEY.

BY ANNA MASON.

NAOMI felt lonely enough as she got into the car at B. and took a seat. She had left her home on the Lake Shore road very early in the morning; breakfasted and changed cars at B., and had a long day's journey before her, which would leave her among cold and distant kinsfolk who were utter strangers to her. She was dressed in a suit of black alpaca, not at all modish in make. It was relieved from sombreness by a knot of cherry ribbon at her throat. A coarse black straw hat—innocent of "style" in its trimmings—came over her forehead, and with a gray veil half concealed her face. She wore cotton gloves, and carried a well-worn little valise in one hand. A small brown trunk in the baggage car held all her remaining possessions.

Notwithstanding the shabbiness of her attire, she was exceedingly pretty. Her slight tall form was grace itself, and her complexion was exquisitely fresh. She had a book with her which her father had purchased at a stand as he bade her good-by. Even so small an extravagance was unusual with them.

Naomi did not care to read just then. It amused her to watch the people who entered the car, to observe their bustle in finding seats, and so on.

A party of four entered and seated themselves directly in front of her. There were two young ladies, dressed quietly, but with great attention to prevailing fashions, and their escorts. They were expressing their regrets that they had not obtained seats in the drawing-room car, but finally settled down for a cosy time. Their merry talk and laughter quite enlivened their corner of the car. Somehow it saddened Naomi at the same time that it amused her. These animated, tastefully-dressed young ladies, with their gallant and courteous attendants, filled her with a sense of her own deficien-

cies. Her loneliness was too pitiful a contrast to their gayety.

Filled with painful reveries, she turned her face to the window, and her eyes gathered quick tears. What she saw as she inadvertently looked out was displeasing to her. A young man stood staring at her in the rudest manner possible, and, as he caught her eye, impudently raised his hat. The quick blood mounted to Naomi's brow, and she turned, in great embarrassment, to see if her fellow-travellers had noticed his impertinence; but no one seemed to have paid any attention. She looked up a moment later, to see the flashily-dressed fellow standing beside her.

"Move your bag, miss, and I'll take this seat here by you, *I guess*."

For a moment she hesitated, then answered in a voice that trembled slightly:

"There are other seats, sir; I prefer you shouldn't sit by me."

"Very good. *Perhaps* you've paid for the whole seat?—all in your eye! I'll bespeak the conductor, I will!" And she walked off, wagging his head in a threatening manner.

"What a shame!" cried one of the pretty young ladies in front, impetuously wheeling around. "You replied just as he deserved."

The train began to move, and every seat was filled, when, to Naomi's horror, she saw her tormentor in the doorway, accompanied by the conductor. An unreasoning terror seized her. Her journey would not end before nine o'clock that evening, and she had never travelled far, nor alone, before.

"May I take this seat, madam?" inquired a low pleasant voice; and Naomi looked up to see a gentleman bending above her, whose refined and noble countenance invited confidence.

"O thanks! if you will be so kind," responded she, in a tone of desperation.

The gentleman smiled, deposited his own and her valise in the rack above, and took possession of the vacant seat.

"I saw that you were annoyed, and as that fellow seemed bent on troubling you, I thought I would take the liberty of preventing it. I will not intrude upon your seat so soon as he shall have disposed of himself elsewhere."

"I'm sure I've no right—that is—I've no objection," stammered poor Naomi, not knowing what to say.

"This is my seat, mister," suddenly exclaimed a coarse voice; "I only just left it for a minute."

"You are mistaken, sir," responded the gentleman, suavely but firmly. "You never occupied this seat."

"You needn't 'sir' me, you macaroni! Just hoist yourself out of that seat, or I'll show you daylight before you're done with me."

"You're intoxicated," was the brief comment.

"Move along!" exclaimed the conductor, authoritatively. "You've no right to the seat. You'd better not make a row here. I won't permit it."

A push accelerated the rowdy's movements, and he passed on, looking unutterable things, and took the seat behind, which the kind stranger had just vacated.

"You do not know how I thank you for your intervention," said Naomi, with a tremble in her voice. "You have saved me so much annoyance."

"Thanks are unnecessary. No gentleman could have done less," touching his hat. Then he offered Naomi a paper.

"Thank you; but I have a book I mean to read."

This was all the conversation that passed between them for several hours. Naomi observed him furtively. He was very handsome, tall, nobly-formed, and of graceful and elegant manners. She noticed the pleasant smile that played about his face as he read. She admired his golden mustache and his waving brown hair. Suddenly their eyes met, and she blushed guiltily at having been caught studying his face. She looked away, but only to meditate on the beauty of the deep blue eyes that had encountered her own. Somehow those blue eyes would keep coming between her and the page she was reading. She no longer felt lonely nor unprotected; she no longer envied the gay young ladies in front.

Then she took herself to task for her complacency. The young ladies were with friends or relatives who held it a privilege, no doubt, to thus attend them; while the gentleman beside her was a stranger, here only because he *pitted* her lonely unfriended condition. Her proud young heart beat high with resentment at the notion.

She was right in her estimate of Arthur Vance's motives. He was there beside her because she was a woman alone and unprotected. He had noticed her annoyance, from his seat behind, and acted on a gentlemanly chivalrous impulse. Now he was surprised to find how beautiful the girl was whom he had befriended. He took note of the exquisite bloom of her complexion, and the dusky beauty of the long heavy lashes that fringed her lowered eyelids, white as snow by contrast. He remarked that her hair turned to golden bronze in the sunlight, and wondered if she'd ever matched that rare shade at the hairdresser's; or if those smooth braids were all her own by a dower of nature. Then he smiled at himself for his idle interest in an unknown girl.

Finally the train stopped for dinner. Mr. Vance asked Naomi to accompany him, but she declined courteously, and he respected her all the more for her decision.

"I have my lunch in my valise, thank you; it is all I shall want," had been her reply. And he had placed her valise beside her, bowed, and taken his departure. In a few minutes he returned, bringing a cup of tea.

"But you've not had time for your own dinner," protested Naomi.

"Ample time. Pray drink your tea at your leisure. I bought cup and all, and when you are done with it you can toss it out of the window."

Naomi accepted the tea without demur. She was too true a lady not to know how to receive a favor gracefully. When the gentleman tossed the cup out of the window she smiled to think how shocked her step-mother would have been at such a piece of extravagance. The smile revealed perfect teeth, and large dancing hazel eyes that commanded Arthur's deepest admiration.

They fell into a conversation, a little constrained at first, but quickly thawing out into the friendly and confidential. Naomi had not forgotten her father's warnings against talking to strangers, and, consequently, her conscience gave her a little

prick now and then. But stiffness and reserve would melt before the winning kindness of her new friend's manner.

He informed her that he had just seen their quondam acquaintance of odious memory engaged in a brawl in the refreshment-room, and that he had been left behind; but he made no reference to his former intention of resuming his old seat, now left vacant; indeed, there was nothing in Naomi's beaming face to suggest that such a course would be desirable.

Then Arthur Vance talked of himself, and Naomi learned that he was an orphan, with no very near ties; also that he had just returned from a trip to Europe. After that Naomi waxed eloquent on her favorite theme, her longing to travel, and almost ere she knew it she was talking of herself and her own history.

Her past life had not been an over-bright one. Her father was a kind-hearted man, with a very tender feeling for this only child of his first wife's; but there was her stepmother, and six or seven children younger than Naomi to be clothed and fed, and all with very inadequate means. No wonder, then, that poor Naomi's bed had not been one of downy ease, nor her sadly-trodden path strewn with roses. She had not much to regret in having left home.

Notwithstanding his limited means, her father had insisted on giving her the opportunities of an excellent education, in compliance with a promise given to her dead mother. These opportunities Naomi had conscientiously improved. She knew next to nothing of modern languages or music, but was thorough in practical English branches, and also a fine scholar in the classics.

Her stepmother was not a bad-hearted woman; but she had accustomed herself to regard her stepdaughter with jealousy and dislike. In vain did Naomi try to propitiate her by hard work and painstaking; their very natures were antagonistic, and it was a relief to each when they parted.

In response to a letter of inquiry a distant relative of her mother's had written, informing Naomi that he had secured for her the position of teacher in the public school at C. Furthermore, he offered to meet her with his wagon when she should arrive at that village, and promised to afford her the shelter of his roof until she could secure respectable board.

The school was about to open. Naomi had duly written to accept, and thanked him for his offer, giving him the date of her intended arrival. She would reach C. at nine o'clock, but had, in the meantime, two hours to wait at S. before there would be any connection of trains.

All this Mr. Vance gathered from Naomi's replies, or inferred from disconnected remarks; and a very meagre barren history he thought it. Then it came across him, as he watched her beautiful innocent and animated face, that he would like to bring brightness and joy into such a life, and reap the rich reward of love and trust.

"My journey ends at S.," said Mr. Vance. "I am to visit my cousins there. I fear you will be lonely waiting at the depot. There is an excellent refreshment-stand, with good waitresses; you must take your tea there. If you will not think it presumptuous, I shall be happy to return from my supper, and see you safely on your train, in charge of the conductor."

"I shall not be afraid, sir; and I should not like to put you to so much trouble."

"It will be no trouble," replied he, gravely. "I want to do by you as I should wish a gentleman to do by a sister of mine, had I one, under the same circumstances."

Naomi thought, somewhat bitterly, that a sister of his, had he one, would not be likely to be so circumstanced.

"Would it be presuming too far to inquire your name?" asked he, with real diffidence.

"Naomi Fairfield," replied she, simply.

"And mine is Arthur Vance. My early home was Buffalo; now I am a citizen of the world, and it is all before me where to choose. I wish, Miss Fairfield, you would permit me to see you while you are at S.?" He expressed the wish in a tone that was interrogative.

"How can I, Mr. Vance? I shall be busy teaching; my home will be among utter strangers. My position is not that of young ladies who can receive callers with propriety." The sweet face wore a slight cloud of bitterness.

He ought to have understood and received it kindly; but his pride was aroused to resentment by what he considered a slight.

"You are right, Miss Fairfield—and a very delicate way of saying, 'I know nothing of you, Mr. Vance. You may be a pretender to the character and privileges of a gentle-

man." However, I can give you and your friends credentials to silence doubt."

"It was not a delicate way of saying anything of the sort," retorted Naomi, with spirit; "for I have felt no such doubts, entertained no such scruples. It is simply true that I am not at liberty to act as I should choose."

He was silent after that, cold, Naomi fancied, and with a sigh she resumed her book. Faint as was the sigh, it reached his ear, and stirred his heart strangely.

It was growing dusk; clouds had gathered, and it threatened rain. One of the merry girls in front had fallen asleep with her pretty cheek resting against the window-pane. Suddenly there was heard a low rumbling sound, a shriek of terror, a confusion of voices. Naomi sprang to her feet in alarm. Arthur stood beside her. For an instant their eyes met—what each read in the other's face I cannot say—but, in the darkness that followed, his arm was about her, their lips met for one thrilling moment of insane happiness; then there came a crash, and for Naomi unconsciousness.

When she became sensible of life again she felt in a very weak and shattered condition. She was lying on the ground, wrapped in a man's overcoat. It was raining heavily, and some one was bending above her anxiously.

"Where am I?" she asked, helplessly.

"Thank Heaven, you are yourself again, Miss Fairfield. I have been terribly anxious."

Naomi raised herself with difficulty, and looked about her. She could catch the confusion of voices, and see the wreck of cars, and dusky forms moving about in the weird light of the lanterns.

"We were plunged down that embankment," explained Mr. Vance.

"Were any killed?"

"One poor man, I heard. They have sent the engine to S. to bring cars to our relief. It is not far. How do you feel now, Miss Fairfield?"

"Better. Did you get me out?"

"Through the broken car window. You have cut your head, my poor child."

"It is nothing," she said.

He dressed the wound skillfully and tenderly. It was a great relief to him when once more he had Naomi beside him on a car, the train in motion for S. How kindly he soothed and comforted her!

"No more scruples, Miss Fairfield. You must trust me as if I were your brother. I will arrange everything for you to-night, and you mustn't permit yourself to feel the least anxiety."

Naomi protested no longer; she left it all to him. No sooner did she find herself in the snowy bed of a quiet room, in the charge of a kindly middle-aged woman, than she fell asleep, without a care for the morrow.

She did not awake till the nurse let in a flood of sunshine. Very bruised and weary she felt, but insisted, nevertheless, on getting up, being dressed, and sending for Vance.

"I am very glad to find you better," said he, with a bright smile, as he entered.

"Weren't you hurt at all?" she questioned, gently.

"Only a little bruised."

"I feel quite well, only dizzy and faint. Mr. Vance, I mean to eat breakfast and go on to C. I never can adequately express my thanks to you for your goodness."

"With that pale face it is useless for you to talk of going anywhere just yet. Shall I send for your friends there to come to you?"

"No, they are strangers to me; they would not care to take the trouble."

"If they were expecting you last evening they ought to be here; they ought to leave no stone unturned till they have learned your fate. Inhuman! I do not like these cold-blooded relatives of yours. Shall I send for your father, Miss Fairfield?"

"No, Mr. Vance, my father is poor and harassed. My journey cost him all he could readily spare. I have means enough to remain here for a day or two, when I shall feel well enough to go on to C. Add to your many kindnesses by telegraphing to my father that I am safe; then have no more anxiety about me. I will send you word of my safe arrival at C., since you are so kind as to take so much interest." Her voice faltered.

"I shall not leave you, Naomi, unless you command me to; unless you send me away with the sweetest, brightest hope of my life crushed out. When I first heard your quaint little name I could think of nothing but the words of Ruth: 'Entreat me not to leave thee; whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried.' When I asked you

why you left your home, Naomi, you replied, 'to better myself.' Child, there is nothing in life better or more satisfactory than love, and that I offer you in abundance. Do not turn your face away from me and weep, darling, but listen to me. Yesterday when I sat beside you (what an age I have lived since yesterday!) I thought how good and sweet you looked, and what joy it would be to win you for my own. I sat there planning how I should come on to C., get acquainted with your relatives, tell them of my intentions, and persuade them to shelter you in their own home till I had learned if I might win you for my wife. But if you will trust yourself to me on so short an acquaintance, as Heaven is my witness, I will never prove unworthy of your confidence. Tell me that I may try to win your love, Naomi."

Her answer I will not give, but let facts speak for themselves.

Arthur never apprised his relatives of his

presence in S. He was married to Naomi at the quiet little hotel. They did not trouble themselves about the relatives at C. Let us trust there was no difficulty in filling Naomi's place as teacher at the public school. Nothing could exceed her father's astonishment when he learned of his daughter's hasty marriage, but it gradually turned to joy and thankfulness as every letter of hers breathed with her new happiness. Many comforts and luxuries found their way to the Lake Shore cottage. Six months later he visited his daughter at her beautiful home in Boston, where he found her, lovelier than ever, surrounded by all that elegant tastes and large means could procure. The three weeks he passed there were the happiest he had known since his own young days.

As for Naomi, she was content to her heart's core; and amid all her possessions, held that love was indeed "the best and most satisfying of all."

NOTHING TO WEAR.

BY KATE SEAFOAM.

"WHAT are you going to wear to the party, Annie?" asked pretty Ida Marston, as she came up beside Annie Ames, swinging her books, neatly strapped, on their way home from school.

"O, I don't know yet, hardly, what I shall wear—but we've got some time to plan. I'm real glad Maud gave out her invitations so early, because I want to wear something nice to her party. I think mamma will get me a new dress. What shall you wear, Ida?"

"I think I shall wear my new blue suit; I haven't worn it but once to church, and ma bought me such a lovely pearl set yesterday. Don't you think it will look nice? Shall you curl or crimp your hair?"

"O, I know you will look lovely in that! I think I'll have my hair in loose curls," Annie answered.

"You look better with your hair in curls than you do with crimps, because your face is rather full," Miss Ida replied, in a very wise considerate manner for a miss of twelve years.

"Yes, I think so; and then Maud told Lizzie Clark I did. But don't you wish our hair curled like Katie Lee's? Why, all she has to do is to comb and wet hers with cold water, and it just twists and twines right round in such lovely curls, so large and soft!" said Annie, earnestly.

"I know she's got real nice hair, but should you have thought Maud Leslie would have invited her to her party, Annie?" Ida asked.

Annie hesitated a moment, and then said, slowly:

"Why? She's real pretty and good, you know, Ida."

"Yes, but she's awful poor! Why, she never has anything new to wear. Of course Maud will want us all to dress nice, and I don't see what she's got fit to wear, anyway, to a party," said Ida, with a scornful toss of her head.

"Well, perhaps she won't go," Annie replied.

"Of course she will, for she looked real pleased when Maud invited her, and told her she must be sure to come. Maud is so

queer!" said Ida, with a puzzled look.

"I know it! Why, she only asked the rest of us; she never told us we must surely come," Annie answered, laughing. "But here comes Katie," she continued, glancing behind her at the sound of a light step.

"I mean to ask her what she's going to wear," said Ida.

"O, I wouldn't!" Annie whispered, hastily, entreatingly.

In a moment Katie came along beside them, and Ida quickly said:

"Going to Maud's party, Katie?"

Katie caught her breath with a little quiver of delight, and replied:

"O yes! Wont it be nice, Ida?"

"Yes, I expect it will—Maud always has everything real nice; her father is so rich, and he thinks so much of her, he lets her have just all she wants. What shall you wear, Katie?" Ida asked, giving Annie a sly nudge.

"O, I don't know. I suppose I shall have to wear my old plaid," Katie answered, slowly, a slight sadness in the soft cheery voice and a cloud crossing the sunny face.

"Shall you? You know we shall want to look real nice, as Maud will expect it. Perhaps your mother will get you a new one, we've got so much time to fix in, you know—a whole week. I think 'twas real good in Maud to give us so much time, for I never like to wear the same thing so many times;" and Ida nudged Annie again.

The bright pretty face was wholly overshadowed now, and there was a perceptible tremor in the low voice, as Katie said:

"No, I know mother can't, and I shan't ask her to, if I have to stay at home, for mother isn't well."

Kind-hearted Annie hastened to say:

"O, I shouldn't stay at home, Katie. I guess your plaid will look real well; anyway, you always do look nice, no matter what you have on you—you look so well yourself; and you know Maud told you to be sure to come, and I know we shall have such a nice time."

"Yes, I know we shall; and Maud was real good to ask me," Katie said, eagerly,

her face brightening again. Then she turned the corner, bidding the girls a kindly good-by as she hastened home.

"What a little goose!" Ida said, as soon as Katie was out of hearing, her red lips curling contemptuously. "Before I'd wear that shabby old plaid dress to Maud Leslie's party, I'd stay at home forever, I know. Why, she's worn that everywhere she's been this winter, and now 'tis March! I should be ashamed of it, and I wanted to tell her so, but you stuck up for her in such a way, making her think she was so much better than the rest of us, that she didn't need nice clothes! I think the teacher does enough of that, and now Maud Leslie has taken her up, making her think she's everything, and—"

"Who is that I'm doing such a favor, girls? I wish some one would do as much for Maud Leslie. They say listeners never hear any good of themselves, but I think I did then; you see you spoke so loud, Ida, I couldn't help hearing," said a merry voice, as Maud Leslie laid a hand upon a shoulder of each one, and pushed herself in between them, and peered laughingly in their faces.

But Ida's face flushed so guiltily, she looked so ashamed, that Maud said, a slight pettishness in her tone:

"Well, never mind, if you don't care to tell who you were talking about."

"O, we were talking about Katie Lee, that—that you were real good to ask her to your party," gentle Annie hastened to say, in a confused manner.

"Why! I don't see why it was any more goodness in me to ask her than it would be to ask any one else," Maud replied, in a teasing way, laughing in their faces again.

"Well, but there don't many ask her, anyway, for you know she's real poor, and she can't—she can't dress nice at all," Ida stammered out spitefully, nearly crying with vexation.

"Well, that don't make any difference to me; I think she's just sweet, if she does wear old clothes, and Mr. Amory told mamma she was the most thorough scholar that had ever entered his school; and I'm sure I think that's a good deal. More than he can say of us, isn't it, Ida?" And frank Maud laughed merrily again.

"La! One would think any one else couldn't do anything, to see what a fuss there is made about her," Ida sneeringly replied.

Maud laughed again, and then said:

"O, I guess you feel a little sore, Ida, just now, because Katie went past you so nicely this afternoon. Well, I don't see as she was to blame about it, do you, Annie? Of course, if you could have answered correctly you would, and you could not expect Katie to say she did not know when she did; and I'm sure I don't think we ought to slight her because she is a better scholar than we are. I'd rather play than study, and I'm willing to own it."

"I don't know of anybody that does blame her for being a good scholar, but I don't see that she's anything extra. But that wasn't what Annie and I were talking about. I know I should not want her to come to a party of mine if she's going to look so shabby," Ida crossly replied.

"O well, you can do just as you please, you know, Ida; but I shall be pleased if Katie comes to my party, shabby or not, for I like her—and then, she really does not, as my mamma said, need so many fine things to make her look lovely, as many others do. Mamma said something pretty about her, it was something about grace and good-nature clothing her as in the most lovely garment—I can't tell it exactly, and that she was like a sunbeam—and I think so too. Good-by, girls!" And Maud skipped lightly up the broad steps leading to the fine residence, her home.

There is usually in every school one girl who is, as it were, the ruling spirit and queen regnant. Such was Maud Leslie in Raynor Grammar School. From the time she entered it, all, each in their own peculiar way, gave allegiance. Lively, spirited, witty and frank-hearted, she was in every way well worthy the flattering obeisance of girlish hearts; and then portly haughty Squire Leslie was the wealthiest man in Raynor, a fact well established in the hearts of parents and children. In her childish demeanor Maud combined most attractively the frank dignity of her haughty father with the tender lady-like gentleness of her beautiful mother, and the natural ready tact to mete out to each and all of her self-constituted subjects their proper portion. To Ida Marston, naturally vain and conceited, she was often as we have shown her. To use her own expressive words, she delighted to "take her down a peg." But to timid, sensitive little Katie, whom she truly loved, she was the gentle, sympathetic, encouraging friend.

True, her subjects often secretly rebelled, as is usually the case, yet none openly defied her power. Maud Leslie was quoted and held by all as supreme authority on all subjects—hence Ida Marston's jealousy of poor Katie.

By the time Katie had reached her humble home the cloud had partially lifted from her sunny heart, and she gave her fond mother the usual smiling greeting, an eager light in the soft eyes.

In a moment she said, earnestly, her sweet face flushing with joy:

"O mother, Maud Leslie has invited me to her party!"

"Has she, my dear? When is it to be?" her mother asked, quietly.

"In just a week. I may go, mayn't I?" Katie asked.

"If you have got anything fit to wear, Katie, you may," her mother answered, hesitatingly.

The cloud crossed the sunny face again, and, as Katie did not make any reply, her mother continued:

"We will look over, and see if your things will do. I do wish I could get you a new dress, Katie, but I cannot; and as it is nearly warm weather again, we must try to get along till it comes time for a summer outfit, which will not be so expensive. I am very sorry, as I presume they will all dress nice."

"O, never mind, mother. I guess my plaid will do," little Katie hastened to say, quickly noticing the sadness in her mother's low voice.

Mrs. Lee smiled upon her thoughtful little daughter, and then there was silence as Katie's fingers sped nimbly over the slate working out the difficult problems in the next day's lesson, the first recitation, while her mother prepared their simple meal.

After tea Katie washed the dishes, swept the floor, and then she went quickly to her room to look over her scanty wardrobe. She took down at once three dresses, all she had beside the cheap delaine she wore. A blue muslin, the dress of last summer's wear, was of course unsuitable, and was hastily laid aside, and poor Katie's choice rested between the other two. The steel-colored poplin, a dress worn the preceding fall and spring, she found she had really outgrown; although she could manage to fasten it with much hard squeezing, it was ever so much too short, for Katie had grown

very fast in the past year. Now came the plaid, the only one left. Katie looked it over with a rueful face. It was really shabby. The seams were all badly frayed, and the sleeves were worn threadbare, the lining peeping through in many places. Katie laid it down beside the other in despair, forced to confess, like "Flora McFlimsey," she'd nothing to wear. "O, I can't go, I can't!" she wailed, tears filling her eyes and falling over her cheeks.

"O dear! I do wish I could go! I do want to go so much!" she cried, pitifully, as she caught up the dresses again and hastily looked at them. "If I could have a long overskirt to wear with the gray one, and piece it down, or a blouse waist to wear with the plaid skirt, and some bright ribbons, I might do," she said; "but I know mother can't afford it, and so I won't ask her. I shall have to stay at home—and they'll have such a good time!" she concluded, sadly, as she sat down on the edge of the bed, and silently, tearfully fought a battle with self bravely, striving to wear a cheerful face when she went down to her mother.

Mrs. Lee looked up quickly as she entered the room, and said, anxiously:

"Wont they do, Katie?"

"I guess not, mother," Katie answered, in tremulous tones.

"Perhaps I can manage it in some way," her mother said, hopefully.

"O, no matter, mother. I can stay at home. I wouldn't worry about it," Katie replied, striving to speak bravely, but the tearful tremor was more perceptible in the low voice, and she sat down hastily to her books. Then Katie bore up quite cheerfully till she was alone in her room again. She put the dresses away sadly, and she lay awake a long time wishing and thinking, and pride whispered many times, "They'll know just why you didn't go; you let them all see how much you wanted to go, and they will know that you had nothing to wear."

Then Katie—you see she was nothing but a weak little girl, after all—really wished she might be sick, so that they wouldn't know. So, wishing and worrying, hoping something would happen, wishing there were really fairies and all such like, the belief in which she had outgrown, she fell asleep at last, and did not wake until the sun was flinging bright glances into the

small room, and her mother had called her twice.

She dressed hastily, and went down stairs with a sad puzzled face. Her mother looked curiously at her, and then said:

"You don't look well, Katie; didn't you sleep well, dear?"

"I guess so, mother," Katie replied, absently, as she took her seat at the table.

She ate but little, and her mother regarded her curiously, there was such a strange wondering look on her face.

"What is it, Katie?" she asked, as they rose from the table. "What makes you look so strangely?"

Katie hesitated a moment, and then she looked up suddenly and said:

"What is there in the big gray trunk, mother?"

"The big gray trunk! Why, Katie?" her mother asked, in surprise.

"Did I ever have an Aunt Fanny?" was the answer Katie gave.

Mrs. Lee looked at her sadly a moment, the tears filling her eyes, her whole face tremulous; then she said, softly, "You had, my dear."

"Is she dead, mother?"

"Yes, Katie, a long time ago—before you were born. She was but a girl when she died," her mother answered, sadly.

"You never told me about her, mother," Katie said.

"It is a sad story, my dear," Mrs. Lee replied, wiping the tears away from her eyes.

"But you will tell me sometime, mother, about her, and what there is in the big gray trunk, won't you?"

"Yes, dear; but how came you to know about it, Katie?"

"I—I guess I dreamed it, mother," replied Katie, the wondering look deepening on her face.

"It is after eight, dear, and I'm afraid you'll be late," said her mother, glancing at the clock.

Katie hurried away to school, that strange sad look deepening on her face. Teachers and scholars looked wonderingly at her—it was an unusual thing to see her cheerful face sad—as she went through her recitations in an absent manner.

"I know what's the matter with her; she can't go to the party because she hasn't got anything to wear that's decent, and I'm glad of it!" Ida Marston said, exultingly,

to Annie, when she wondered what made Katie look so sad.

"Well, I'm real sorry, if it is so," said Annie, turning away from ill-natured Ida.

Maud Leslie was very friendly and gentle to little Katie that day, fearing, too, that it might be as Ida said, and wishing Katie wouldn't mind anything about what she wore.

The day, which was a wearisome one to Katie, was over at last, and after tea, when her mother said, with a sigh, "As well now as any time, Katie—I will tell you about your Aunt Fanny, the story I ought to tell you." She drew her rocker close beside her mother, her face pale with suppressed excitement. But when her mother sighed again, she said, softly:

"I wouldn't tell about it if I didn't want to, mother."

"I feel that I ought to tell you, Katie, if it does make me feel badly, as you ought to have now, when you need it so much, that which rightfully belongs to you, my dear.

"Your Aunt Fanny was a very pretty but high-tempered girl, Katie—very gay, fond of dress, and proud of her beauty. Her eyes were in color like yours, dear, a clear dark brown, with a vivid flash to them; and her hair, instead of being dark like yours, was of a pale golden hue, abundant, lustrous and wavy; her soft round cheeks were the clearest red and white; indeed, she was very lovely in form and feature, graceful in every movement. She was the beauty of the family, and she knew it well. There were three girls of us, and until she was twelve years old Fanny was the baby, the pet of the family. Then little Harry was born. How proud and pleased the whole family were with him—the baby, the only boy, and it had been so many years since there had been a wee cunning baby in the family! We never tired of watching his babyish movements, his dawning intelligence. Of course he was a wonderful baby, so bright and pretty. Ah! we were very happy until that sad bitter day that I cannot bear to think of. Harry was just six months old that day. Well, we girls, Elsie, Fanny and myself, were invited to Grace Harley's birthday party. The Harleys were a very wealthy, haughty family. Grace was near Elsie's age, and her most intimate friend. We were of course all excitement over it. It was to be a grand affair—the nicest of refreshments, parlor theatricals,

tableaux and dancing. We had new dresses which we had not worn but once or twice, and Elsie and I had not a thought or wish for another, as ours were nice and becoming; but Fanny came home flushed and greatly excited about a piece of beautiful blue dress goods she had seen displayed in the window of our most popular dry goods store, and from which Belle Wells's mother had purchased her a dress the day before, and she was having it made to wear to Gracie's party. Fanny insisted upon having one like it, declaring that she had 'nothing decent to wear.' It was elegant, very expensive goods; and besides, mother thought Fanny's dress was quite good enough, and she told her firmly that she could not have it. She would, she said, get us new ribbons and gloves, but our other clothes were quite nice enough; and as Elsie and I were satisfied with such as we had, she must wear hers, which was as good, or remain at home.

"Fanny was highly incensed at this, and cried and fretted about it, going so far as to declare she would have the dress, till mother lost her patience, and told her, more sternly than she had ever spoken to her before, not to say another word about it; if she did she should feel compelled to punish her in some way. At this Fanny rose from her chair in a great rage, pushing it so spitefully she overturned it with a loud noise; then stamping furiously across the room, she gave the low cradle, which stood in the way, a violent thrust with her foot and upset it. Mother had just lain little Harry in the cradle, and in her blind rage I suppose poor Fanny did not notice but that mother still held him in her arms, as she had when she entered the room. The sleeping baby was thrown from the cradle, its head striking violently against the sharp edge of the broad projecting hearth of the open old-fashioned stove. Mother gave a terrified scream as little Harry cried out once and then lay quivering and twitching, rolling his eyes convulsively. Elsie and I ran to him, crying with fright, as mother took him up, pressing him fondly to her, wailing nervously over him. A moaning sound attracted my attention, and looking up I saw poor Fanny with white stricken face, clenched hands and wildly staring eyes. 'O Fanny!' I cried, as frightened at her looks as I was about poor Harry. At the cry mother turned and gave her a fierce

look. Fanny shrieked wildly, and just at this moment father entered, exclaiming, 'Why, what does this mean?' looking in alarm at Fanny, not seeing little Harry.

"Just look at her work, will you?" cried mother, in tremulous excited tones, pointing at poor Harry, who lay stiff and purple in convulsions from the fright and injury done his head. Mother was so terrified she did not know what she did or said.

"What? How? Has she killed him?" father asked, hoarsely.

"She threw his cradle over in her ugliness, just because she couldn't have a new dress, and has killed my precious baby," mother wailed in reply.

"In the fright and passion of the moment—for my father was very, very fond of this bright little boy, his only son, as, indeed, he had been of all of his children—he turned and gave poor Fanny a quick stinging blow upon her shoulder. Fanny gave another shriek, and fell down like one dead. It was the first and the last time my father ever struck one of his children. Fanny had fainted. Elsie and I had presence of mind enough to take her up; and soon she revived, with such a startled look of woe upon her pretty face, while father rushed away for the doctor for poor little Harry. Well, I will make this sad story as short as possible. Dear baby Harry was badly injured. He did not live but about two weeks. We were all very gentle to poor Fanny during that time, she suffered so deeply. She could neither eat nor sleep; her sadly-stricken face I can never forget as she sat beside little Harry, of whom she had been so fond and proud, her staring glassy eyes fixed upon his drawn face and bandaged head. We could scarcely persuade her to leave that place a moment, and the day he died father took her in his arms and carried her tenderly to her bed. She seldom left it after that—she just pined away with grief and horror at what she had done; and in spite of all we could do or say to relieve her, she died, too, in about three months after little Harry; the nervous system had received a fearful shock, so the doctor said. She was naturally of a very nervous temperament.

"Well, come, Katie," Mrs. Lee continued, as she wiped the tears away; "I will now show you what is in the old gray trunk, which all belongs to you—given to me for you by your grandmother."

Katie followed her mother up stairs to the dark closet in the hall near her room, and stood beside her with a wondering awed face while she unlocked the old gray trunk. But when it was opened and her eyes rested upon its bright contents, she gave a quick cry of childish delight. She held her breath with wonder at the beautiful things as her mother carefully, tearfully took them out and placed them one after another upon the rack beside Katie.

It was a girl's complete outfit, rich and tasteful. As Mrs. Lee took out the last dress—an elegant crimson moreen tastefully trimmed with a dainty frill of lace at the neck and wrists—Katie gave a quick cry, and said:

"There, that's the one, mother! The one I dreamed the pretty girl who called herself my Aunt Fanny took out of this trunk and put on me, and told me to wear

it to the party." And Katie took it tenderly, admiringly.

"It is so strange!" Mrs. Lee murmured, as she told Katie to try it on. "It will be the most becoming one to you, my dear," she added.

It needed but slight alteration, being a trifle too large for slender Katie, who was delighted with it.

"And I'm sure I feel to wear it, mother," said Katie; "for only think how much poor Aunt Fanny wanted me to. 'Tis as good as a fairy gift, but poor auntie!" she murmured.

"It is so strange! I never knew anything like it!" said Mrs. Lee.

So Katie went to Maud's party, and enjoyed it finely; and she was as lovely a girl as any there. There was much wondering about her nice dress.

ONE OF FIVE.

BY ADA L. FLETCHER.

CHAPTER I.

FIVE as pretty girls as could be found anywhere in all the country gathered together in that one cosy little bedroom at Moreton Park. All in various stages of dishabille, and with curiosity very plainly written upon four pretty faces, and contending there with sleepiness, for the old clock out in the hall had just chimed the ghostly hour of twelve. Upon the face of the owner of the room, who stood with her back against the door to prevent all possible egress, there was a ludicrous mixture of solemnity and mischief.

"You are all here, my sisters," she said, at last, in a sepulchral tone of voice. "And you wish to know why I have summoned you hither—"

"O now, Elma!" broke in a clear imperative voice. "If you have anything to say, do say it, and let's go to bed, for I'm awfully sleepy." And Bertie Nelson, taking a piece of very sour pickle out of her mouth just long enough to utter these words, stretched her round arms, and opened that pretty mouth in a very suggestive way.

"Don't hurry me, Bertie Nelson," said her cousin Elma, sternly. "That which I have to impart is of weighty import, but—where on earth do you always get pickles? Do you carry a jar in your pocket, or how do you come by 'em?"

"Echo answers *buy 'em*," answered Bertie. "Isn't it reasonable?"

"Girls!" said a voice that had not spoken before. "We are losing our 'beauty sleep' by waiting here; and as Elma seems to have called us together only to ask Bertie where she gets her pickles, I think we'd better go."

Stately Annette Orr it was that spoke, gathering her shawl about her shoulders as if to leave the room, followed by the other two, Bertie's older sister Helen, and another cousin, sweet Laurie Moreton. They were all cousins, and all very different types of beauty. Elma was a "nondescript," she always called herself, with a very fair complexion, mirthful gray eyes and exceedingly dark hair; a saucy pug nose, and quite as

saucy a mouth. Annette Orr, or "Queen," as she was nicknamed, was the only real blonde in the group, with hair that might almost have been called auburn, there was such a gleam of red in its gold, and cold haughty blue eyes that expressed well her cold, selfish, calculating nature.

Helen Nelson was Annette's opposite in everything, each forming an excellent foil for the other, yet there was something about Helen's face that Annette's lacked. Was it the deep dark eyes that always seemed to hold a mystery in their depths, or the firm red lips with the slightly sorrowful droop at the corners, that told you that Helen had seen a great deal more of life than Annette? They were fellow-graduates of a renowned seminary, and each had been two years in society, yet Helen seemed to have lived five to Annette's one. She was of a very reserved and reticent nature, the only creature she was ever known to pet or caress being her little sister.

Bertie Nelson! How shall I describe her? How shall I make you feel that you know and love her, as did every one who looked upon her bright face? Just sixteen that very month, small and slight of form even for that age, yet with the wild grace of perfect health in every movement: a darting birdlike grace that won for her her pet name of "Robin" from her schoolmates and friends; wide brown eyes in which a world of mischief lurked, but which sometimes *would* show the deeper, more earnest feelings of her heart, in the misty softness that came upon them. A restless head "running over" with brown curls, a gipsy complexion, clear and brown, which sun or wind could not injure, with two rose leaves for the cheeks; that small saucy red mouth, with a set of teeth that dazzled the beholder, beneath a straight little nose that never would turn up, no matter how scornful she felt. That was Bertie Nelson! But how describe the ever-varying expression that gave the greatest charm to the girl's face? I give it up!

Laura Moreton was just a pretty girl, with a great deal of common sense beneath her bright hair, and a warm loving heart

always open to everybody. A sober methodical little body, always "picking up" after the others, and taking care of things generally.

But, dear me! how long I have left Elma with her back to the door, and Annette wanting to get out!

"Go back, Queenie," said the former, with a peremptory wave of her hand. "The pickle question was only a side issue, suggested by the practical illustration before me. I have something of importance to say to all of you. Listen! Do you all know *why* we have been brought to Moreton Park?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Bertie. "If so, I give it up at once."

"I suppose," said Annette, loftily, "we came to visit our aunt Mrs. Moreton."

"O, you 'suppose,' do you?" said Elma, who did not have very much love or respect for her haughty cousin. "What Miss Orr condescends to 'suppose' ought inevitably to be true. But may I ask you, sweet cousin, why we have never visited our aunt Mrs. Moreton before? We have been, some of us, nearly twenty years in this unfriendly world, and have never seen the inside of this house before. 'Suppose' again, Nettie dear! But I will say to those who don't even 'suppose,' that I know! My little mother, whom you all know never could keep anything from me that I wanted to have, was obliged to tell me the cause of so strange a proceeding on the part of our aunt, but she made me promise not to tell you before you came, for fear some of you might 'fly the track.'"

"Don't talk slang, whatever you do, Elma," said Annette. "If you have anything to say, please say it in English."

"Ahem!" coughed Elma. "How shall I please her majesty? Well, young ladies, as you are all aware, our learned and travelled cousin Archibald Moreton (O, such a name!) has arrived at home. Having also arrived at the mature age of twenty-seven years, it is deemed proper that he should take unto himself a wife. And as it would never do for him to take one with no Moreton blood in her veins, or no Moreton, or some other kind of money, in her pocket, our venerable aunt puts on her glasses, and looks about among her relations, sending written advertisements to the heads of the family—'Wanted, a girl! Must have the

Moreton good looks, the Moreton sense, and the Moreton money.' There are just five of us in all, all possessing a fair share of the given requisites, and here we are, for this modern Turk to take his choice of five! How do you like the situation?"

"Nonsense, Elma!" said Annette and Helen together; while Laurie chimed in with, "You don't expect us to believe this, do you?" And Bertie, in her surprise and indignation, sprang to her feet, and without a word stood gazing at Elma.

"O, it's true," said that young lady, calmly. "You needn't burn my face up with your eyes, Robin."

"Well, now, I just tell you it's going to be between four instead of five, because I didn't come here for any such purpose, and I am not going to have all my fun spoiled that way; so you can just count me out."

"Thank you, Robin," said Elma, gravely. "That's one chance more for me! But allow me to say that perhaps you will have no voice in the matter! My prophetic soul tells me that you are the one our aunt will choose, because you are the youngest, and his lordship can train you up in the way you should go."

"We don't live in Turkey, Elma Arnold, if this is a Turk," said Bertie, impetuously. "And if they think they are going to spoil my first little flight into the world by clipping my wings this way, they're mistaken. I shall begin by treating Mr. Moreton in such a way that he won't look at me after the first day."

"I think Elma just wants to tease you, little sister," said Helen, putting her arm round Bertie gently. "If there is such a plan, we are supposed to know *nothing* about it, and can just go on 'in the even tenor of our way,' and that leads us to repose just now, I think."

"Well!" said Elma, resignedly, as the girls passed out, "I have given you fair warning, and if you don't choose to take it, I can't help it. I mean to lay my plans to be mistress of Moreton Park."

A chorus of light laughter came back to her, for each of them knew that Elma Arnold never had a plan about anything in her life.

In fact, there was but one scheming head laid upon its pillow in Moreton Park that night, and that was the head of the mistress thereof.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the breakfast-bell rang next morning there was a flutter of dainty morning-dresses into the hall, and a murmur of sweet voices. One alone was missing.

"Where is Bertie, Helen?" asked Elma, quickly taking note of her favorite cousin's absence.

"I don't know," said Helen, a little anxiously. "She was gone when I awakened. I wish you hadn't said anything about that to her, Elma, for there is no telling what she will do now; and if she don't take it that way, it will spoil all her pleasure."

"Pshaw! I'll risk Robin to circumvent everybody, and have all the fun, too," said Elma, as they went down the stairway together. "But what excuse will you make to madam our aunt for her absence?"

An answer was prevented by their entrance into the breakfast-room, where Mrs. Moreton was already seated at the head of the long table glittering with family silver. Still a handsome graceful woman, despite her fifty years, she rose to receive them with a gracious "good-morning" to each. Then "my son Archibald," who was still standing beside his chair, was presented to each of his fair cousins. Blue eyes and black, brown eyes and gray, flashed their greeting into his, and a rapid opinion was formed as the owners took their seats.

"I shall like him," thought Helen. "He has a good face."

"I don't know about him. He is not all my fancy painted him," thought Annette.

Laurie thought, "The idea of my attempting to please him!" While Elma's thoughts would have been best expressed by the whistle she longed to give.

Archibald Moreton was a very handsome man, as he had a right to be, since there never was a homely Moreton; but his face was about as easily read to a casual observer as Egyptian hieroglyphics. His own mother didn't know her son yet, as was evident from the scheme she had planned.

"Where is your sister, Helen?" she asked directly. "I hope she is not ill."

"I'm here," said a breathless voice at the door. "I ran every step of the way after I found I was so late, and please excuse me this time, auntie." And Bertie, with her scarlet hood fallen back upon her shoulders, and her brown curls rippling above it, gemmed here and there with frozen snow she had brushed from the trees

in her rapid walk, eyes and cheeks glowing with the morning air, walked swiftly round the table, and held up her lips for the stately lady to kiss, which she did very warmly.

A cool little bow was all she vouchsafed to her cousin on being presented, and, throwing her cape and hood on a vacant chair, she took her seat by Helen.

"Where did you go, anyway, Bertie?" asked her sister, in an undertone, a flush of excitement staining her dark cheek.

"I was tracking rabbits," said she, briefly. "I saw their tracks under our window, and followed them into the wood."

"Did you bring any of them home with you?" asked a grave voice at the foot of the table.

"If I had taken a gun with me I should," not a smile dimpling her cheek as she looked at him. "But I couldn't find any one awake to ask for one."

"Yet I must have been up before you," he said, "since I was in the wood and saw the acquaintance you made."

The blood rushed to the girl's face as it very seldom did, staining neck and cheek, and even the shell-like ear, as she wondered if he had seen all her wild frolic that morning—bending down the already snow-laden saplings, and letting them spring up with her again, clinging to the branches with tingling hands, and various other freaks more pleasant in the act than in the remembrance. Had he seen them all? She regained her composure though in a moment, and, seeing the wondering look on Helen's face, turned to her aunt with:

"I did make another acquaintance beside the rabbits this morning, auntie! The very old Witch of Endor, I do believe."

"That was Aunt Judith, I know," said Mrs. Moreton. "Where did you meet her?"

"She was in the woods digging in the snow with a stick. Scared me a little at first, but I spoke to her, and she asked me to go into her cabin to warm."

"You didn't go, Bertie Nelson?" cried Annette.

"Of course I went," said Bertie. "And she gave me a sweet potato roasted in the ashes to eat. If I had thought of it, I would have asked her to send you one."

"Did she have any pickles?" asked Elma. Happening to look towards Mr. Moreton just then, Bertie saw an amused under-

standing look in his face that puzzled her so much she did not answer; and very soon they arose and went into the parlor, where a wood fire burned and sparkled.

"O—O!" cried Bertie, in a surprised delighted voice, holding her little cold hands out to the blaze. "I am sure I thought this house was heated by a furnace. Are there not registers in our rooms?"

"Yes," answered her aunt. "But I can't give up my wood fire in one room, anyway."

"That's nice of you," said the girl, energetically. "I shall just stay here all the time." And down on the rug she sank, much to Helen's mortification.

"What will become of the rabbits if you do?" asked Archie, looking down at her, a smile hiding behind his dark mustache.

"I meant all the time I stayed in the house. I hate registers."

"Now I like them, don't you, Cousin Elma?" said Archie, turning so suddenly upon that young lady, who was gazing meditatively down at Robin on the rug, startling her so that for once in her life she blushed.

"No, I don't," she said, shortly. And then the six went off into an earnest debate on the opposing merits of furnaces and fireplaces, bidding fair to become well acquainted in a very short time. And all the while there was a mirthful gleam in Archie's eyes that puzzled Bertie sorely. Then, as ever after, she took the opposite side of the question, and grew very warm and excited, while he remained cool and impassive. Thus the morning was passed with music and conversation; then, as the old-fashioned dinner-hour approached, Archie arose and looked at his watch.

"Young ladies," he said, "as perhaps you do not know, two of my friends are coming on the next train. It is time now I was going to the station to meet them."

"How nice!" said Elma. "Why didn't you prepare us for this before?"

"You can take no possible interest in them, and must not meddle with them," he said, looking steadily at her. "But you must surely have known, all of you, that I would have some one to meet you. Or did you think I was *Turk* enough to want all five of you to myself for three months? I think more of your pleasure than that."

Bertie looked up rogishly at Elma, who tried in vain to look innocent and uncon-

cerned under the searching eyes bent on her. Then he turned to Helen.

"One of my friends is already an acquaintance of yours, Cousin Helen," he said. "And of yours also, Annette, I think. He met you in New York two years ago."

"What is his name?" said Helen, a little listlessly, toying with an exquisite Italian vase that had stood on the table beside her, while Annette's blue eyes flashed with interest.

"Chalmers Dalton," answered Archie, keeping his eyes riveted upon Helen's face, which paled and then grew scarlet beneath his gaze, while the vase slipped from her trembling fingers with a crash on the marble table; and as she stooped to collect the fragments, she did not answer.

"I remember him very well, and liked him very much," said Annette. "Who else is coming?"

"Only a friend for Bertie," he answered, mischievously. "A nephew of Chalmers, Oscar Mannering by name, a very nice boy, of perhaps nineteen years. You must try to amuse the little fellow, Bertie, and not let him get homesick."

"Thank you," with a little affected childish lisp. "Will he play with me real nice, do you think?"

"I hope you will not quarrel. Mother must see to that." And, with a polite bow, he left the room.

"What could he mean, Bertie, by my not having any 'interest in his friends?' I can't imagine," said Elma, in a low tone.

"Don't ask me what he means by anything," said Bertie, pettishly. "I don't think he knows himself. I don't like him, and I shall hate that Mannering boy, I know I shall."

"You don't hate me though, Robin, so don't look at me as though you did," said Elma, caressingly. "Why, where are the other girls gone? To dress for dinner, I suppose. Let's follow *suit*—do you see the pun, Robin? I'll try and take the Mannering boy off your hands." And they whirled away through the halls and up the stairs to the music of their own light hearts and feet.

CHAPTER III.

JUST before the dinner-bell rang Elma came out of her room and rapped hurriedly at the door of the one occupied by Helen and Bertie.

"They've come!" she ejaculated as the door was opened. "And I just tell you, Robin, you may look out for your heart when you see that Mannering boy! He's no boy at all! Every bit of twenty-one, and just a love of a mustache! But what's the matter, Helen?" she asked, abruptly.

"Only a bad headache," was the answer, as the pale face was lifted from its pillow. "Bertie has been so busy bathing my head, she has forgotten to dress. Harry, dear child, and go down with Elma."

"I would rather not go. Let me stay with you!" And Bertie tenderly smoothed the dark hair back from the throbbing temples.

"O no, Robin, I'm better alone, you know. Go down and enjoy yourself, and ask our aunt to excuse me for this evening."

When they were gone, she arose, and sinking down by her open trunk, buried her face in her hands. "How should she ever meet Chalmers Dalton?" was the question that racked her aching head and heart. How, without betraying the secret she had guarded so well, dwell beneath the same roof with him for the weeks or months to follow?

Two years before, as Archie had said, she had met him in New York, and they had soon become warm friends—then lovers. All had gone smoothly until six months before, when an anonymous letter she received parted them forever. Not because she fully believed its accusations against her lover, but because she had doubted him for an instant. He could not brook suspicion—his proud spirit revolted at its very first breath, and he would not condescend to deny or explain anything the letter contained.

She took her journal from the trunk, read over its loveliest record, opening the leaves as one opens a coffin-lid, lifting amid blinding tears the withered rosebuds that marked each page, and thought, as she laid her aching head back upon her pillow, how much better it is to lose a friend by death—to bury their bodies out of your sight, knowing their souls are still yours—than to lose a living friend! To see them moving about you, and to meet them every day, even talking with them as of old, yet knowing all the while that they are lost to you forever!

Down stairs, after dinner the young people were gathered together before the pleas-

ant wood fire. Annette, looking royally beautiful in her rich dinner-dress, had taken possession of Chalmers Dalton, and was exerting all her powers to keep him at her side—and she could be very fascinating when she chose. But all the while his thoughts were not of her. She only served to recall to his memory with painful distinctness the girl he still loved with an undying fervor. Annette knew this, and it troubled her vanity. "I will make him forget her!" she vowed in her heart.

"How charming your little cousin is!" he said, looking towards the sofa where Bertie was engaged in an animated conversation with Oscar Mannering, whom she was already bewildering. Giving her sole and undivided attention to this young gentleman, she had snubbed Archie so unmercifully whenever he addressed her, that at last he had taken Elma on one arm and Laurie on the other, and gone on an exploring tour around the room, looking at and talking of the pictures that graced its walls.

"Yes, Bertie is very pretty," said Annette, "but I do not think her near so beautiful as her sister Helen."

Chalmers started and looked at her inquiringly.

"Is it possible you do not know they are sisters?" she asked. "Bertie has been in boarding-school all her life, but I supposed you had seen her during vacations. Helen is here also, but ill with a headache. You know"—and she laughed lightly—"they say we are all here for Mr. Moreton to choose his wife among us, and Helen is certainly the favored one."

O Annette! Annette! Those proud beautiful lips must have been accustomed to falsehood, or that one would not have slipped so glibly over them!

Chalmers said nothing, but his proud face grew sterner and colder, then assumed a "society smile," and for the next hour he devoted himself so faithfully to his fair companion, that she congratulated herself on her success.

But there had been a listener to all this of whom she knew nothing. There were all sorts of little surprises in Moreton House in the shape of unexpected doors and windows, and just behind the crimson velvet chair Miss Orr occupied one of the former stood ajar, and beyond it sat Mrs. Moreton in her little private room.

"You mean something by that, Annette Orr," said the old lady, dropping her book in her lap and listening intently. "I have not known you for so many years for nothing, my dear."

Being a very wise old lady, she soon arrived at a conclusion very near the truth, and resolved to act upon it.

But several days passed away and Helen had met Mr. Dalton so coldly and calmly, that her convictions were almost shaken. Indeed, she was getting bewildered every way, for Archie's attentions were very evenly distributed between his cousins, excepting Bertie, who would not let him be kind to her. She was overwhelming in her condescension and kindness to Oscar Mannerling, until the youth's handsome head was turned, and he fancied himself very desperately in love. Bertie did not care. Anything to keep Archie Moreton from thinking *she* was on the list from which he was to choose his wife. She heeded neither warning nor reproof from Helen, and when she saw the rebuking glance in Archie's eye when she was guilty of some unusually reckless piece of mischief, she would shrug her pretty shoulders, looking up at him with bright defiant eyes, and off again to something new. Elma was a very able coadjutor, and between the two they kept the house in a perfect whirl of excitement and gayety, becoming very popular in the usually quiet neighborhood. Balls and parties followed each other in rapid succession, and the hours flew by as if fairy-winged.

Each of the five had her own especial circle of admirers, but Bertie was a favorite with all. If Archie had not had a clue to her conduct, he would have been sorely puzzled to know why she was so kind to everybody else and so unkind to him. But he did have a clue; and taking pity at last on his mother's evident distress, he took her into his confidence, and the two had many secret conferences over this, and also over the affairs of Helen and Dalton; for, in return for her son's confidence, Mrs. Moreton told him of the conversation she had overheard. Archie knew a great deal more about this love affair than either of the parties knew; and though not a believer in match-making as a general thing, he determined to interfere in this. He also knew more about Miss Orr than that young lady thought he did, and had by no means a fa-

vorable opinion of her honor or honesty.

Helen went about the house her own gentle, quiet, dignified self, trying in vain to check Bertie in her wild pranks, and endearing herself every day to her cousin and her aunt, with whom she spent most of her time. So the days went by, and the "Quintette" had been at Moreton Park almost the allotted time of their visit, and, as Elma said, "still nobody knew whom the Turk would call to share his throne." Overhearing this, "the Turk" smiled again behind his mustache, but kept what he knew and thought to himself and his mother.

CHAPTER IV.

THE three months of their visit were almost over, and the pleasant days of spring had come. Bertie came out on the piazza one evening just before sunset, and, seating herself on one of the lower steps, rested her chin in her hand in an ungraceful but comfortable position, and fell to musing. "What did it all amount to, anyway?" she asked herself. Here she was going on in a way perfectly unnatural to herself, when there wasn't the slightest use of it. No doubt Archie Moreton had never thought of her, so young, so giddy, so unstable even at her best, for a wife, and she had made him her enemy for life, when she might have had him for a friend always. Such a true wise friend he was, she knew, for Helen said so. And two great tears gathered in Bertie's eyes, and plashed down upon her hands; so unusual a sight, that she gazed at them in astonishment herself. The fact is, Bertie, for the first time in her life, had the "blues." She had refused to join the others in a ride they had taken that afternoon, because she wanted to be alone. While she was still thinking what "a vanity and vexation of spirit" life was, there came a patter of childish feet on the gravel walk, and "Joe," a little waif who had drifted into the family to become the spoiled pet of the house, came toddling to her side.

"Miss Bertie pay with Joe?" he said, interrogatively, as he reached her.

"No, Joe, not now. Run down the walk there in the sunshine, and I will come directly," giving the curly head a pat that made him happy for an hour, and was soon lost in deep thought again, from which she was

only roused by the whirl of the approaching carriage wheels. They sounded faster she thought than they ought to, and looking down the long avenue, she saw the horses coming—the carriage evidently empty behind them, and swaying with every motion of the runaways. Her first thought was of Joe, and springing to her feet, she ran down the walk, until she saw him standing in the centre of the avenue, evidently petrified with fear, his small hands out-tretched for aid. How she reached him she hardly knew. She was not conscious of her own danger as she flew down the walk. She only saw the pallid face and wide blue eyes of the child with the terrified horses dashing upon him. She caught the glitter of the carriage wheels, saw the flying hoofs almost upon her, and the next moment had caught the boy in her arms and sank back on the bank unconscious, leaving one foot to be crushed beneath them. She knew nothing more until she found herself being carried toward the house, in a pair of arms that, strong as they were, trembled beneath their burden. Looking up she met Archie's dark eyes looking pityingly into hers. In an instant all her reckless desperate feelings returned and she struggled to free herself.

"Put me down, Mr. Moreton! How dare you!—" and then she burst into tears.

"I can't put you down, Bertie," he said, gently but firmly, "until I am sure you can walk, and I 'dare' because there is no one else to help you. Don't struggle so, little girl! You will only tire yourself and me."

So she could only cover her burning face with her hands and lie still until they reached the piazza, where he stood her gently down. But she could not stand. One heavy hoof had crushed the delicate foot and ankle, and she sank down with a moan of pain.

Then he took her up again—"Don't you see now, Bertie," he said, "why I dared to carry you? I will take you to mother's room, then leave you if you wish."

Mrs. Moreton met them with a frightened face, and Archie explained that the party had left the carriage at the foot of a hill which they wished to ascend, and the horses, left to themselves, became frightened and started for home. He was on horseback, and fearing his mother would be frightened, he started after them, arriving just in time to see Bertie catch Joe from under their feet.

"How could you risk your life that way, Bertie?" asked Mrs. Moreton, when she had removed the dainty boot from the swollen foot, and was bathing and rubbing it, while waiting for the others. Archie had gone to meet with the carriage.

"I didn't think my life was of any account to any one just then," said Bertie, with a little hysterical laugh. "And I knew you all loved little Joe."

"And didn't you know we all loved you, too, dear child?" There were unmistakable tears in Mrs. Moreton's eyes as she drew poor Bertie's head to her bosom.

"I didn't see how you could," she answered, humbly. "I have not tried to make any one love me since I have been here, and I have been so—so hateful and wild, and I didn't think you could do anything but hate me."

"Why, child, we knew," and Mrs. Moreton was just on the point of betraying her son's confidence, when the door opened and Helen flew to her sister's side pale with anxiety.

"O Robin! little Robin! are you sure you are not hurt worse than Archie told me?" taking her out of her aunt's arms into her own and kissing her over and over again.

"There is one who loves you, at any rate, Bertie," said Mrs. Moreton.

"Dear old Faithfulness—mother and sister both to me," said the girl, stroking her sister's face. "She knows I'm not half so bad as I pretend to be. But what is the matter with you, Helen? I never saw you look like that before," turning the face now crimson with happy blushes toward the light.

"I will tell you after a while," whispered Helen, and then the others thronged in to praise and pet the little invalid until she could not help but know they all loved her. Archie brought Joe in upon his shoulder, and he made a triumphant march round the room, telling everybody how "ye gate bid horses yun ovey Joe and Miss Bertie. Joe knock 'em down next time."

"What a pity," said Elma, when they were through laughing at this, "that you should have taken it into your head, Robin, to make a heroine of yourself on the very evening of the grandest and last ball of the season at Moreton Park. You can't dance with that foot. And then the supper! what a treat you'll miss!"

"I'll bring her up a plate of pickles" said

Archie, gravely. "That's all she cares for, you know. That is, if she hasn't already a supply on hand, or rather in her pocket."

Elma looked up at him with a new light in her eyes. "I am suspicious of you," she said. "What do you know about pickles?"

"What do you 'suppose' I know?" he answered. "Or is it only Annette that 'supposes?' I know Bertie likes them."

"What are you two talking about" cried Bertie, in amazement.

"O, just a little 'side issue' about pickles," said Archie. "The real question before the house is—Registers—to be liked or disliked?"

Elma's face grew scarlet as the truth flashed upon her mind, and she ran from the room in dismay.

"I am going to send you all away now," said Mrs. Moreton. "You will drink your tea in the parlor, and then disperse to dress for the evening—Bertie and I think *we* will stay here."

"I will come back when I am dressed, Robin," whispered Helen, "and tell you all you want to know."

"And won't you tell me what you were talking about a while ago?" said Bertie, catching Archie's hand as he passed her.

"Yes, and a great deal more sometime," he said, stooping to kiss her before his mother's eyes, and leaving her more bewildered than ever.

CHAPTER V.

HELEN came in a little later, and kneeling by Bertie's sofa gave her a full history of that evening's proceedings.

"You knew, little sister, that Chalmers Dalton and I were to have been married this winter, but you did not know the reason why the marriage did not take place. I did not tell you because I did not want your bright spirit clouded and dimmed because mine was. But it was an anonymous letter, Robin, that made all the trouble; and you will give me credit for great self-control, when I tell you that I have known for a long time that Annette Orr wrote that letter. I knew at school how well she could disguise her hand, and I found in a book in the library at home, a copy in her own writing of the letter I received.

"I did not accuse her of it, because I thought then it could do no good any way, and I have tried to treat her kindly since.

One day, though, since I came here, in one of my sad moods I told Aunt Moreton, who has been a mother to me, Bertie, all about this, and to-day Archie brought Chalmers to me and told him all. And so, little sister, we are happy again."

Bertie had risen from the sofa in her mingled indignation and happy excitement, but Archie whom she had not known was there, placed her gently back among the pillows. "The patient is under my care now, Miss Nelson, and your presence is requested in the drawing-room." So Helen left them and Archie stood by the sofa.

"Mother asked me to come and stay with you, Bertie," he said, "until her duty of receiving the guests is performed. If there is any one else you would rather have, tell me and I will bring them."

There was no answer but a sob, and the next moment he was kneeling at her side, trying to take her hands away from her face.

"Does that mean, Robin, that you would rather have me than anybody else? Tell me! Not only for this evening but for always?"

He didn't need any answer when he saw her face, which was soon resting very contentedly against his shoulder. Her first question was Bertie-like. "How—could—you—like—me—Archie?"

"I—really—don't—know—Bertie," he answered, "only I couldn't help it. It was not because you tried to make me like you, was it? But then the register settled all that."

"O, do tell me about that," she cried, starting up again.

"I can't tell you anything unless you keep still," he said, soberly. "It is important for your health that you let your head stay where I put it. Besides, such restlessness disturbs my thoughts."

"O well, any way," she said, resignedly, "so you tell me."

"There isn't much to tell, only that my room is directly beneath the one Elma occupies—(Keep still, Robin!)—and the night you came her register was open, and I couldn't help hearing every word you *all* said. And as I had already taken a fancy to you from your picture, I determined when I heard you disclaiming so vigorously any intentions upon my honorable self, that you—Bertie Nelson—should some day be my wife. Don't you think I will carry out that determination?"

Again no answer was necessary save the one he took from her lips, and he went on: "So you see I had a clue to your conduct all the while, and understood my willful little darling. I knew, too, who it was that used to steal out of the pleasant parlor into poor old Aunt Judith's cabin and read the Bible to her by firelight. A thousand other little things like that, Robin, that you thought I knew nothing about, were making me love you all the time. Then to-day when I saw you, so utterly forgetful of self, spring in between those flying horses and our poor little Joe, I resolved that if God spared my darling, she should know to-night how much I loved her—now are you satisfied?"

She answered him then, but I should weary you were I to repeat all that was said. At last, "what are you going to do with Oscar, Bertie?" asked Archie.

"O, I forgot to tell you that two weeks ago, I persuaded him that Elma suited him a great deal better than I did. I think that will be a match."

"That Elma!" said Archie. "How she made me laugh that night. And a while

ago, when I heard her come into her room, I called through the register, 'Do you think this "modern Turk" has taken his choice of Five?' and she stood there and scolded me for fifteen minutes, ending by saying she thought I might have taken her at her word, when I heard her say she meant to be mistress of Moreton Park. But she seems to be very well satisfied. I think all the 'Quintette' ought to be. Even our quiet Laurie has captured a heart. Annette will go away though, feeling that she undertook a great deal and failed."

"Did you tell her you knew all about her?" asked Bertie.

"Helen would not let me," he said. "And I think myself her punishment was sufficient when she saw them together and knew her scheme had failed. There was one plot though that didn't fail, wasn't there, Bertie? I think, to use a little slang, that as a schemer our mother is a success, for she says *you* were her choice for me even before you came. And I know I am more than content to take the 'One of Five' Fate has given me. What do you think about it, Robin?"

OUR LITTLE PRUDENCE.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

It was fifty years ago, and more—so long ago that all the boys and girls of that time have vanished quite away; some have been changed by the wand of that wonderful old wizard, Father Time—who is so full of his tricks that he will not spare even the children—into grave and gray-haired men and women, who, when you ask them about the things that happened so long ago, will look for a moment as bewildered as Rip Van Winkle after his sleep, and then tell you, with a sigh, and as if they half doubted it themselves, that they were young then; and some, perhaps—who knows?—are boys and girls again in the Father's house.

Fifty years ago! But the world was just as fair as it is now, there was just such a thrill in the clear winter air to make the blood leap and dance, just such a long bright joy in the summer days. The little cheery old lady, with undimmed eyes, and cheeks like the bright side of a winter apple, who told me this story, sitting by the fire, with her knitting dropped into her gray silk lap, says so, and she knows. But if I go on in this way I shall never get to the story! I shall have to begin all over again.

It was fifty years ago, and more, on a cold gray November morning, that little Prudence Page sat by the window, in a very stiff high-backed drab armchair, with a bit of canvas and a little muslin bag full of worsteds in her lap. The whole room where she sat was drab—carpet, furniture, walls, curtains; it seemed to have reflected the dull gray November sky; it made one feel chilled and depressed to enter it. Even the pattern of Prudence's worsted work was a drab parrot on a brown perch.

Abner and Susan Page, Prudence's parents, were of the strictest sort of Friends, even in the Quaker City where all were strict, and "gay Quakers" were as yet unknown. They both sat on the "high seats," and Abner was known as one of the most "just and godly" among the men, Susan one of the most "sober and discreet" of the women. Abner (if anybody had called him Mr. Page he would have been so offended that I dare not show such

disrespect to his memory), Abner, I say, was "well-to-do," and the tall "straight-up" brick house, in the Square, was not, by any means, destitute of "creature comforts," especially when Quarterly Meeting brought a host of Friends there from all parts of the State, as guests. The good things of this life were to be enjoyed with "sobriety," and though the Quarterly Meeting dinners were master-pieces that would have gladdened the heart of an epicure, they were eaten as if they were worm-wood; and though Susan Page and the wives and daughters of the other "well-to-do" Friends attired themselves in silks of the richest texture, they were always of the most sombre drab. To Abner and Susan Page's minds bright colors were the invention of the enemy of mankind, and the expression of any emotion was a deadly sin.

Prudence was the child of their old age, and to have seen her when her baby laugh first echoed—so strangely!—through the silent old house, would have made you think that the old days of fairies and changelings had come back. Rosy, restless, dimpled, crowing, she was the jolliest baby that ever ruled a household. And for a time she seemed likely to rule even this precise household. Abner was fairly surprised out of his severe dignity; and as for Susan, she was so softened by the baby hands that clung to her, so brightened by the little presence that filled the whole house like a burst of sunshine, that her grim face relaxed, and fairly beamed from under the drab poke bonnet, even on the high seats.

But this state of things did not last long; the habits of a lifetime, and the stiff and strained ideas of duty which Abner and Susan Page called "the dictates of conscience," were too strong. When the novelty had a little worn off the old atmosphere of rigid repression settled over the house, and in that atmosphere the child had changed from the romping, frolicsome little mite, whose glee made the gloomy old house-ring, into a demure, grave little maiden, who seldom laughed, who knew no playmates and no plays, whose life was as sombre and gray-hued as her dress—fashioned

always after Susan's own. The mother watched with satisfaction the gravity daily deepening on the little face, and the dignity and precision of the little movements. She noticed that Prudence's arms were never thrown around her neck now, in the impetuous affectionate way that was natural to her, but she did not notice what a sad wistful look was in the child's face when she saw, in windows, or in the street, other children kissed and caressed.

One great joy had come into Prudence's life. Hannah, the parlor maid, had given her an old doll, the cast-off property of one of her nieces. The child had little hope that she would be allowed to keep it, but it happened to be at Quarterly Meeting time, and a kindly old Quaker lady who was visiting there had said, "Let the child keep it, Susan; it will do her no harm." And Susan, touched, no doubt, at the bottom of her heart by the child's delight, yielded, and even went so far as to give her a piece of drab silk, to make the doll a dress. Prudence made the dress herself, and no "dolls' dressmaker" of these days could have made a more "stylish fit" for the most fashionable doll. But there were no flounces, and frills, and paniers, as the fashionable doll would have; it was made as plainly as Susan's and Prudence's own, and a bit of a snowy kerchief was folded primly across her dollship's breast; it looked very nice, though it scarcely comported with a certain reckless and rakish air which previous hard usage had given her.

Susan Page looked upon the making of dolls' dresses as a waste of time, and Dorothy (Hannah had named the doll) had never had another. Worsted work was a sufficient recreation, Susan thought, when Prudence's lessons, and her plain sewing or knitting were over. And Prudence had come to look upon the worsted work as a great treat.

On this November morning, however, as she sat by the window with the drab parrot in her lap, she was too full of an unworroted excitement to work. And even Susan Page herself was moving about the house with an unusual quickness of step. A great event was about to happen to the quiet household. A short time before Abner Page had received a letter from France, from his only brother, saying that he was dying, and committing his little daughter,

who would be otherwise friendless, to Abner's care. Nothing in the whole course of his life had so disturbed Abner Page's mind. His brother Joseph had been a "wild" boy—at least according to the standard of his Quaker relatives. He had departed entirely from the ways of his fathers, had married one of the "world's people," a gay young belle, had gone abroad, and for years been as one dead to Abner. But his heart, not by any means as hard as one might have thought from his exterior, still clung to the memory of "little Joseph."

As he read the letter his eyes grew dim, and he took off his glasses and wiped them briskly.

"We must have the child here at once. She shall be as our own, Susan."

Susan Page fairly gasped.

"Abner, couldn't thee put her at a school? Does thee think a child brought up like that is a fit companion for our little Prudence?"

"She is only ten—a year older than our little Prudence; would thee like to have her put at a school?" said Abner, sternly.

And after the first shock the kindness of Susan's heart speedily overcame her scruples. Before the little stranger arrived she had firmly resolved that she should be to her "as her own."

To Prudence the news seemed too wonderful and delightful to be true. To have a little girl in the house! and such a little girl as she saw sometimes in the street, perhaps; not a *drab* little girl!

It was no wonder that, on this morning, when she was coming, when her father had even gone to the station to meet her, the parrot's drab plumage did not grow fast. There was another reason, too, why she could not work; the parrot had grown distasteful; she had a secret anxiety connected with him. She had committed on his account a deed of dreadful daring, and—she was afraid—wickedness. The poor little girl had the natural love of children for bright colors, intensified by the unvaried "drabness" of her surroundings. All her worsted work was either brown or drab, shaded sometimes to soft dove-color—Prudence always put in the dove-color first. But one day, as she was walking with her mother, a bit of gay scarlet worsted blew across her path. Prudence picked it up unseen. For days and weeks she had treas-

ured it, and yesterday a temptation too strong to be resisted had come in her way. The parrot was so very gray! And his eyes, being gray, could not be made to show at all. Prudence had picked out the gray eyes, and with her precious bit of worsted given him eyes of brilliant scarlet! They were very red; they were certainly not natural; but they brightened him up beautifully! But ever since she had done it Prudence's tender little conscience had been troubling her. The stare of those red eyes, beautiful as they were, put to flight all her joy in the expected arrival. Hannah came in to dust, and poor little Prudence, feeling as if it would ease her mind to confess, even to her, said, anxiously, and with a great ball in her throat, "Hannah, does thee think it is very sinful to make him have red eyes?"

Hannah was a good Quaker, but she was not so sure as her mistress that bright colors were an invention of Satan. She was very glad that the sound of a carriage stopping at the door relieved her from the necessity of answering. Prudence forgot her trouble, and went, shyly and gravely, in spite of her eagerness, to meet her cousin.

Such a befrilled little damsel as it was that came bounding up the steps! She looked as if she must have stepped out of the latest Paris fashion plate. Behind her came a very pretty-looking maid, who carried a travelling-bag and a doll, even more gorgeously appparelled than its little mistress. Susan Page, who had also been drawn to the hall by the noise of the arrival, looked fairly aghast. But the child was radiant with smiles, and perfectly at her ease.

"Is that my cousin? Why, what a droll-looking little thing you are! And why does everybody wear gray? You look like the Gray Sisters at the convent in Paris, do they not, Annette? I think it is a very ugly color!" she said.

"Susan, the child looks like Joseph," said Abner; and there was something like reproach in his tone, for as yet Susan had not spoken.

"Thee is welcome, my child. I hope thee will be happy with us," said Susan Page.

"O, I am always happy—if only there are plenty of toys and bonbons, and I can go to the circus often!"

"I think perhaps the child is fatigued, and would like to go up to the room thee

has prepared for her, Susan," said Abner Page, hastily.

"O no, I want to stay and see the funny little gray girl! Annette can go and unpack my things. You can leave Tina here, Annette. Poor Tina! her dress has got sadly rumpled, and she looks a fright in that pink, anyway; pink is very trying to her complexion."

The small stranger had ensconced herself in the armchair that Prudence had left, and Abner and his wife departed, evidently for a private conference, leaving the two children alone together.

"What is the reason you don't say anything?" said the new arrival, after another curious survey of Prudence. "Are you shy? I used to be, very, but I have got over it. Do you like bonbons? Annette has plenty in the bag. What is your name?"

As there was no pause between the several inquiries, Prudence answered only the last.

"Prudence? what an awfully funny name! And do they call you all of it? I shall call you Prudy—if I like you. Do you know any stories? I know ever so many about giants and fairies, and one about a little girl that found a golden egg in a hen's nest, and it hatched into a beautiful fairy, and the fairy gave her a splendid palace, and a dress all made of gold cloth, and she married an elegant prince!"

"O, will thee tell it to me?—and O, will thee let me see thy doll?" said Prudence, eagerly, curiosity and admiration overcoming her shyness.

So the ice was broken, and the two little mortals, whose small experiences of life had been so widely different, grew as cosy and confidential together as if they had been companions from their cradles.

The small sprite that had dropped into the household wielded a sceptre more potent than even Baby Prudence had ever held. Abner Page had opened his heart to her because she was Joseph's child, and Joseph was dead. In their private conference, on the day of her arrival, he had said to his wife, "I fear thee may be too stern with her, Susan. Thee must not forget that the child has been very differently reared from our own." And so, because she could not help looking upon her coming as an "afflicting dispensation," conscientious Susan Page was much more tender

and affectionate in manner to her than she had ever been to her own child.

And poor little Prudence noted it, with a sharp sting of pain. It was not jealousy, for she loved her cousin dearly; but it was a wish that she had been made so that her mother and father would love her as they loved Belle. The pain grew, day by day, in the poor child's breast, and embittered all the joy that her cousin's coming would otherwise have brought into her life. She began to think that her father and mother were not so different from other fathers and mothers as she had thought, but that she was in some way different from the children that she saw petted and caressed. It was a mystery as well as a sorrow, but she never confided it to anybody. She never guessed that Susan Page thanked God every day that her child was not as this strange child, that it was pity for her, and horror of her "worldly ways," that made her so tender towards her; and that since her coming there was an added pride and satisfaction in the tone in which she said "our little Prudence."

Belle had a wonderful gift of story-telling, and she opened the gate of fairy-land to Prudence, whose reading had been confined to the Bible, and primer, and the memoirs of "godly Friends." Belle was never tired of telling, and Prudence was never tired of hearing, and never suspected, what was really the truth, that many of the most enchanting stories were either wholly or in part the *impromptu* efforts of Belle's own brain. The child had a very vivid imagination, and Susan had discovered, to her inexpressible dismay, that her word was not always to be trusted. She told stories of wonderful things which she had seen or done, which proved to have little or no foundation in fact. It did not seem to be so much willful falsehood, as that the boundary line between truth and falsehood was not clearly defined in the child's mind. But to Susan and Abner Page it seemed a sign of awful depravity, and many were the conferences they held together as to what was to be done with the child. Prudence, however, had implicit faith in every word that fell from Belle's lips.

It was Christmas day, and a great box of toys and story-books had come to Belle from Paris, from some of her mother's friends, and Belle had been reading aloud to Prudence a wonderful story from one of the

books, until now the twilight had fallen, and she could see no longer. Christmas was of course not observed in the Quaker family. Prudence had scarcely known until this year when it was Christmas. But Susan Page had scarcely frowned at the box of presents; and when Prudence had timidly proposed to make her drab worsted parrot into a pin-cushion, as a Christmas present for Belle, she did not object; and having become so accustomed to bright colors since Belle's arrival, she did not notice the red eyes that had cost Prudence so much anxiety—or if she did notice, she did not speak of them.

The story was finished before darkness overtook the children, and Belle was incited by it to relate one of her own invention. The one in the book was of a changeling that a wicked fairy had left in a cradle. Belle's—more matter-of-fact than usual—was of a baby that had been left in a basket on the steps of a rich man's house, on a stormy winter's night when the wind "roared and howled like everything." When she had reached the point where the people who were "Quakers, and funny, but very good," took the baby in, and treated it just as if it were their own, Belle broke off suddenly, and then said, in an impressive whisper:

"Can't you guess who that baby was?"

"No; will thee tell me?" said poor little unsuspecting Prudence.

"Why, it was you! You mustn't tell that I told you—not for the world! Uncle Abner and Aunt Susan don't want you to know it. But that is the way you came here, and perhaps your mother was a princess!—or maybe she was only a gipsy, or a washerwoman, or something like that. And your name isn't Page, at all, or Prudence, either. I believe it was Rosabella on the piece of paper that was pinned on to your dress; but Aunt Susan didn't like it, so she changed it to Prudence. Perhaps some time you'll find your own mother again, and then she'll take you away. You don't belong here, at all, you know—not so much as I do, because I am Uncle Abner's niece—but they keep you because they pity you; and I guess if you don't find your mother they always will."

Prudence had not spoken a word, but, Hannah coming in with lights just then, Belle was frightened to see how white her face was.

"You mustn't tell, will you?" she whispered, eagerly.

Prudence shook her head, faintly. She tried to speak, but her lips refused to move. The poor little sensitive child felt utterly crushed beneath the weight of misery that had fallen upon her. This was the secret of what had seemed so strange to her! this was the reason why they did not love her! She did not belong to them! She was a stranger; she did not belong anywhere, or to anybody in the world! Only one thought was clear and distinct in her bewildered brain—she must go away from this place, where they kept her only because they pitied her.

She stole out into the hall, opened the outer door and slipped out unseen—out into the night, heedless of the cold and the piercing wind. The streets were bright with Christmas cheer, but she looked neither to the right nor the left. She did not ask herself where she was going; her brain was too bewildered for that; but the passers-by looked at her so curiously, that she turned, instinctively, into a quieter street. How long she wandered she never knew; but it was long after she had become conscious of the sting of the bitter cold, long after her feet had grown tired and heavy. It was at a great brilliantly-lighted church that she stopped at last. She was growing faint and drowsy, and it looked warm and inviting, and she could creep into a corner where nobody would notice her, she thought.

Inside, the church was fragrant with incense, and a great flood of music was rolling through its lofty arches. Little Prudence sank down in a corner, thinking that this must be heaven.

When she came to herself, though it seemed to her that she had only been asleep for a little while, she was in a little cot bed, in a strange room, with two or three black-

robed nuns flitting about, and her mother sitting beside her; her mother, but not cold, and grave, and silent, as was her wont. When Prudence's eyes met hers she started up, and caught her in her arms, and kissed her and called her "darling," and "her precious little Prudence," and "her own little girl," and a dozen other sweet names in a breath, and Prudence felt tears like rain dropping on her face. Poor Susan Page! In her long watching beside her little girl's bed she had learned a deep lesson. All her pitiful little story the child had revealed in her delirium, and Susan's motherly heart had suffered pangs too keen ever to be forgotten.

The child's life had been despaired of more than once since the good nuns who had found her in the church and taken care of her had traced out her home, through her own wandering talk, and brought her mother—almost frantic at the fruitless search that had been made for her—to her bedside; and if she had died, Susan Page knew that she should never have forgiven herself.

So it was to a different home from the old one that Prudence was carried, as soon as she was well enough to go; and it was a very happy home-coming, though Belle was so scared and penitent that her merry ways were a long time in coming back.

"Gravity and sobriety" there would always be in the Quaker household, but Prudence never was able to doubt again that her father and mother loved her; and she was fully convinced that she was really Prudence Page, and not a little princess or a little gipsy.

And she had a long and cheery life, for she herself was the little old lady, with bright eyes and red cheeks, who, as I said, told me this story, with her knitting lying in her lap undisturbed, and looking into the firelight as if she saw there the "long-ago."

OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

BY ALICE B. BROWN.

PATTER, patter, patter!

All day the rain had fallen incessantly, now in dull monotonous droppings, and again in heavy showers that drenched the fair green lawn, and left the sweet May roses mourning for the beauty of which they had been so rudely despoiled. So gray and leaden looked the sky that it did seem as if old Sol would never again light up the earth with his glorious rays. So thought Ada Harwell, as she stood at the window, and gazed out upon the cheerless scene. There was a look of gloom in the bright blue eyes that seemed scarcely in keeping with so young a face, but to one well acquainted with the girl's surroundings it would not have occasioned surprise.

A descendant of an old and very purse-proud family, her mother had made what the world termed "a brilliant match," that is, she had married a millionaire, with qualities of mind and heart infinitely superior to her own. But the world knew little of the unhappiness resulting from such a marriage, of the struggles of a noble intellectual nature to adapt itself to a weaker, of the querulous discontent and fault-finding that embittered Robert Harwell's life, until, after thirteen years of domestic and financial troubles, he passed to that "bourn from whence no traveller ever returns," leaving his wife and three daughters in comparative poverty.

Mrs. Harwell bewailed the change in their circumstances till her health gradually gave way, and at the time our story opens, six years from the date of her husband's death, a more peevish and disagreeable invalid it would have been hard to find. She was a selfish and unloving mother, but a vain one, and her vanity asserted itself fully in her conduct toward her children; she was not proud of their talents, or the amiability that grew and thrived even in the cloudy atmosphere of home, but she *was* proud of the fair delicate beauty hereditary in the Harwell family (and she strove to impress this fact upon their minds), saying mournfully, that as it was their only inheritance, they could not value it too highly. Of their mental and moral wants she had no concep-

tion, and even if she had comprehended could not have sympathized with them.

What wonder that under such ungenial influences the young girls grew up quiet and reserved, with little of the cheerfulness and none of the animal spirits of youth? Ada, the eldest, had developed into a fine graceful girl of eighteen, with a lovely expressive face, and a mind at once quick and retentive. The mother schemed and plotted, in the hope that her beauty would win her a fortune, and when at length one of the oldest and wealthiest gentlemen of her acquaintance presented himself as a suitor for her hand, her delight was unbounded. She little knew how Ada's soul recoiled from the thought of such a marriage, and when she discovered that the venerable lover had proposed and been rejected, there was a perfect storm of anger and reproaches. Nor was there scarcely an hour in which she did not bemoan her daughter's wicked ingratitude in foiling her cherished plans.

Thoughts of such scenes were fitting drearily through Ada's mind as she watched the steadily falling rain, when she was aroused from her reverie by a knock at the door, and Jane the servant appeared.

"Miss Ada," she said, "the widow Lane's daughter came in just now to tell me that her brother Johnnie had a hemorrhage of the lungs to-day. Her mother is down, too, and she says will you please to go and see them to-morrow?"

"I am sorry to hear that they are thus afflicted," was the reply, "and will go this evening if mamma has no objections."

"But certainly not in this rain, miss!" asked Jane, astonished.

"Certainly. With my waterproof and thick boots I shall be none the worse for the walk."

Jane who, like most of her class, had a decided aversion to "poor white trash," went back to her kitchen, inwardly denouncing her young mistress's oddity, while Ada sought her mother's apartment to gain her consent.

Mrs. Harwell raised her eyes from the novel that had rendered her oblivious to passing events for nearly an hour, and im-

patiently answered, "I've no objection to your visiting all the wretched little hovels in town, but your tastes are certainly very peculiar, Ada?"

"In a case of this kind, I think we should be willing to accomplish all the good we possibly can," was the reply.

"Humph! it is a great pity you are not more self-sacrificing to those who have some claim upon you!"

Knowing from experience that a single word would only add "fuel to the flame," Ada wisely refrained from making any reply, but turned away and began to prepare for her walk. She did not forget the physical wants of the invalids, but filled a small basket with such things as she thought would prove most acceptable, and set forth upon her long and toilsome tramp.

The Lanes lived in a miserable tumble-down little cottage on the outskirts of the town, and it was only by their united efforts that they could keep the wolf from the door. Like many others, they had often been the recipients of Ada's bounty, but so quietly and unostentatiously were her deeds of charity performed, that they were scarcely known by those of her own class. These little acts of benevolence and the pleasure they gave to others, were almost the only bits of sunshine in the young girl's life.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the widow in surprise, as Ada's face appeared, like a pretty picture, framed in the doorway, "who would have thought of seeing Miss Harwell out in such weather? We poor people are used to it, but it is enough to kill a delicate young lady like you!"

"But you see I am well fortified against the weather," replied Ada, as she smilingly touched her waterproof, and held out one thick boot for inspection. "And how is Johnnie, now?" she inquired, kindly, not disdainingly to clasp one of the boy's thin brown hands in her own aristocratic palms.

"He is very weak," answered his mother, "and the doctor says he should have nourishing food all the time; but he does not know, miss, that we have scarcely a crust of bread in the house, and I am sure I do not know what we are going to do."

"At any rate, you must not yield to gloomy feelings," said Ada, cheerfully, "but remember that 'every cloud has a silver lining.' I know some charitable people who I am sure will not let you suffer, and I shall report you to them. For the present

I have brought you a small basket of provisions, and now tell me is there not something that I can prepare for your supper? Maggie is so small that I am sure she cannot be a very efficient cook; and although I am quite ignorant, I think with a few instructions from you I can do very well. There! don't thank me, but please tell me what you wish me to do."

The widow gave her a few instructions, so plain and simple that Ada felt assured she could do all unaided, and refusing to rouse Maggie from her nap in the corner, left the room with her basket of provisions, thinking her task "the easiest thing in the world."

That it was not so easy as she had imagined she was forced to confess, as she knelt on the rough hearth in the little close kitchen, vainly coaxing the fire to burn. For a few moments only the blaze would flicker in a feeble uncertain sort of way, then die completely out, and when this occurred for the tenth time, a feeling akin to despair came over her.

"Can I be of any assistance, Miss Harwell?"

Ada started in surprise, but she did not blush, as many a young girl similarly situated would have done, for the voice was that of the doctor—not the old white-haired family physician to whom she had been accustomed from early childhood, but the wealthy and aristocratic bachelor, Paul Fleming.

"Please let me kindle this stubborn fire," he continued, and as Ada resigned her place with thanks, he added, "Mrs. Lane told me that you had undertaken to be her cook this evening, and as she also informed me that you were quite a novice in the art, I thought perhaps two heads would be better than one."

"You are certainly skillful at kindling fires," said Ada, as a bright blaze sprang up as if by magic; "but I suppose you do not mean to say that your knowledge extends to cookery," with a dubious glance at the hands that were fair and white as a woman's.

"Why, yes, that is just what I mean," laughing merrily. "You see, Miss Ada, when I was a boy my father owned an old servant with whom I was quite a favorite, and as much of my time was spent in old Dinah's kitchen, listening to her marvellous yarns, I was thereby initiated into many of

the mysteries of cooking. Feeling confident that her lessons had not been thrown away, in my housekeeper's absence a few weeks since, I undertook to fill her place."

"And came off, doubtless, with flying colors."

"Well, really, I think I may say that I acquitted myself very creditably, the only casualty being a burnt finger."

Could this be Dr. Fleming, Ada wondered, the quiet reserved physician with whom she had scarcely exchanged a dozen words during as many months, and who during his two years' residence in her native town had held himself so entirely aloof from ladies' society that, although only thirty-one, he was generally considered a confirmed bachelor? And what would his aristocratic acquaintances have thought could they have seen him in this dingy little cottage, engaged in the very novel occupation of preparing supper for a poor sick family? That she had never esteemed him so highly as now, while ministering to the wants of others, she was quite certain. And she could not but feel both interested and amused, as she watched him prepare the meal, with a touch as light and deft as a woman's.

"There, Miss Ada," said he, after they had emptied the basket of its contents, and finished their preparations, "we have quite a tempting bill of fare for invalids, have we not?" naming each article. "Now what do you think of my culinary skill?"

"I think," said Ada, smiling, "that I must beg your pardon for underrating your merits, and own that I've been completely eclipsed. Your supper is certainly nice enough to please the most fastidious palate, and I hope your patients will be able to do justice to it."

"What a good little Samaritan she is!" thought the doctor, as he watched her slender form fitting here and there, attending to the wants of the invalids; "and what an interest she takes in these humble people! Truly she is a most noble and unselfish little creature."

An assertion that he found himself repeating as he bade her good-evening at her own door, and clasped her hand with all the cordiality of an intimate acquaintance. Indeed he seemed quite like an old friend to Ada, and she could not help wondering, with his pleasant smile and genial words fresh in memory, why people called him so

proud and reserved, forgetting that she had often mentally termed him such herself.

This was only the beginning of their acquaintance, for the doctor frequently met Ada in his visits to the dwellings of the poor, and especially at the cottage, where she seldom failed to bring some offering for the sick boy, who failed slowly but surely. The favorable impression that he had created strengthened as she saw his unvarying kindness to these humble people, his own purse often supplying their wants. Each day revealed some new phase of his character, that could not fail to awaken her admiration and respect.

She found, too, that he was a man of highly cultivated tastes and deep thought, and there was an exquisite pleasure in hearing her favorite authors discussed by one able to judge of their merits. Then he had travelled extensively, had visited many of the lands famous in song and story, and so vivid were his descriptions of their wonders, that sometimes she really felt as if she were an eye-witness of such scenes.

Yet with all his brilliant talents and acquirements the man was free from vanity. His manners were always those of a finished gentleman, and the absence of that flattery which had been so freely lavished upon Ada by others of her acquaintance she considered the most delicate of all compliments.

What was it that had so suddenly changed her whole being—that caused her eye to brighten as it had never done before, and filled those long bright summer days with such a new strange sweetness? Young and inexperienced as she was she could not at first have told, but the awakening came at last. She loved this man, and O how humiliating was the thought that she had given her affection unsought! for she could not recall a single instance in which his conduct had been more than friendly. He had always been kind and courteous, but had visited her only at rare intervals, and when they had occasionally met at places of public entertainment had shown no decided preference for her society. What a terrible blow it was to her sensitive young nature! But with a true woman's pride she resolved that he should never dream how devotedly she loved him, that she would avoid his presence as much as possible, and when they did chance to meet, would treat him as heretofore.

But this was not to be, for the embarrass-

ing situation in which she was placed caused her, all unconsciously, to appear cold and constrained, and the doctor, utterly at a loss to account for the change in her manner, grew suddenly as reserved as herself.

This did not escape the notice of Johnnie. Thoughtful and intelligent beyond his years, the boy soon discovered that there was something wrong between the two, and the knowledge troubled him greatly, for he had become much attached to both.

One day when it was evident that he was sinking rapidly, and no one was with him but Ada, he fastened his wistful eyes on her face and said:

"There is something I would like to ask you, Miss Ada."

"Well, Johnnie, what is it?"

"Please tell me if you and the doctor are angry. I know I am only a little boy, and perhaps you may think I am too inquisitive, but it has troubled me so much I could not help asking."

A wave of crimson swept Ada's face, but she replied firmly enough:

"You must not think we have quarrelled, Johnnie, for we have done nothing of the kind; it is true we have not been so friendly of late, but you must not let such thoughts trouble you now."

"O Miss Ada! I must talk while I can, for don't you see that I am going away—that I shall be gone very soon? I am not afraid to die, for you have told me all about the beautiful country to which I'm going; but I should feel so much happier to know that you and the doctor were as good friends as ever. I'm sure he thinks a great deal of you, for he told me only yesterday, that you were the noblest young lady in the world."

The languid eyes closed, but in a moment he opened them and asked:

"Will you stay with me till I wake, Miss Ada?"

"Certainly, Johnnie."

The weary eyes closed once more, and he appeared to sleep, while Ada sat watching the white face where the shadows of death were swiftly gathering, and pondering his words in her mind.

When Dr. Fleming came in, half an hour later, he found his patient still sleeping, but as he stood by his side and felt the scarcely perceptible pulse, the boy opened his eyes with a look of pleased recognition. Just then a fit of coughing seized him, so violent

that it left him apparently lifeless, and the weeping mother threw her arms around him in a paroxysm of grief. But in a few moments he recovered sufficiently to speak, bade his mother and sister an affectionate farewell, and taking Ada's hand placed it in the doctor's while he looked wistfully from one to the other.

As the young girl glanced upward she encountered the physician's eyes, and there was something so earnest and thrilling in their bright gray depths, that her lids sank beneath his gaze. She saw a faint smile play over the dying boy's features—then there was a quick convulsive gasp, and as his eyes closed forever, her own grew so misty that she could see no more.

Through the open window the sunlight streamed in golden bars, lighting up the still face with unearthly beauty, and a bird perched on the topmost bough of the old maple warbled joyfully, as if in gratitude that the little soul had found rest at last.

A few moments later, as Ada walked slowly down the path leading from the cottage, she was overtaken by Dr. Fleming.

"Miss Ada," he began abruptly, yet with considerable hesitation in voice and manner, "there is something which I have long wished to tell you, and perhaps I shall never have a more fitting opportunity than the present. In my boyhood I was very imaginative, and often thought fondly of the time when I should meet one who possessed those graces of mind and heart with which I dowered the beings of my fancy. But as I grew to manhood, and mingled more freely in ladies' society I looked in vain for my ideal woman; doubtless in some instances I judged too harshly, but it seemed to me that fashion and frivolity filled their minds to the exclusion of every noble thought. At length I relinquished the idea of ever realizing my boyhood's dreams, grew cold and reserved, and avoided your sex so persistently, that by some I have been termed a woman-hater! But when I met you in the home of poverty, my feelings underwent a sudden revelation; to me you were a very beautiful revelation, the embodiment of all that purity and goodness which I once sadly believed existed only in imagination. Day by day I grew more passionately attached to you, and just as I had decided to tell you how dear you had grown, the sudden and unaccountable change in your manner completely destroyed my reso-

lution. But something which I read in your face to-day encouraged me to hope. Am I right?"

What could she do but, like a true woman, blushingly confess all? and of the great joy that followed their mutual disclosures, it is scarcely necessary to speak.

"I must admit," said the doctor, in reply to some remark of Ada's, "that my conduct to a casual observer would have seemed little like that of a lover, but I had no de-

sire to parade my affection to the world. And the fact that my Ada, never by word or look guessed how devotedly I loved her, proves what a modest opinion she has of her charms. Thank Heaven! the morning has dawned at last, and poor Johnnie's death has been instrumental in bringing happiness to two estranged hearts!"

"God has answered my prayers," said Ada, softly, "and his hand has led me OUT OF THE SHADOWS."